This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

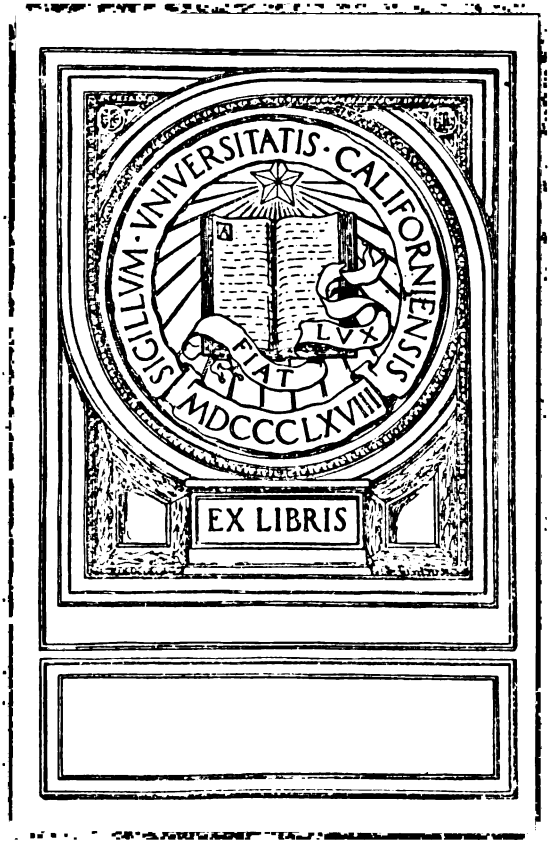
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`


SIGILLVM · VNIVERSITATIS · CALIFORNIENSIS
LVX
FIAT
MDCCCLXVIII
EX LIBRIS

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

ANNE

London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1886

WOMEN IN ENGLISH LIFE

From Mediæval to Modern Times.

BY

GEORGIANA HILL,

AUTHOR OF "A HISTORY OF ENGLISH DRESS."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,

Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

MDCCCXCVI.

1896

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

ANN.

London: Richard Bentley & Son 1896

WOMEN IN ENGLISH LIFE

From Mediæval to Modern Times.

BY

GEORGIANA HILL,

AUTHOR OF "A HISTORY OF ENGLISH DRESS."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,

Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

MDCCCXCVI.

1896

HQ1593
.H5
v.1

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

INTRODUCTION.

THE object aimed at in the following pages is to show the place that women have held in our national life, from the days when what we call the Saxon race was dominant in England, down to the present time. For this purpose those phases of our social history have been dwelt upon which display most clearly the changes that have taken place in the position of women, and the influence of great forces like the Church and Feudalism. Names have been used as illustrations, and not with any intention of adding to biographical literature. Instances that are the most striking individually do not always serve best as examples. For this reason many familiar historical scenes and figures have been omitted. The continuity of a general record would be broken by divergence into episodes interesting on account of their exceptional character. Prominence has been given to domestic life, as that

202701

concerns the larger number, and to those aspects of the case which have not been summed up in the numerous accounts of noteworthy women.

In literature and art, which have their own special histories, where the part that women have played is recounted at length, only a few general points have been noted in order to show how women have stood in relation to letters and art in successive periods. The subjects themselves are treated as stages marking social advance, not discussed in the light of their intrinsic interest and attractiveness.

A consideration of the position of women in England leads, naturally, to the subject of their position in Europe generally, for the main influences which have affected women in this country are the same as those that have operated on the Continent, although the result has taken different forms in accordance with the idiosyncracies of each nation. It is unnecessary to discuss the condition of women in the Eastern parts, for while Western Europe has been changing and progressing with ever-increasing rapidity during the last ten centuries, Eastern Europe—as far as social life is concerned—remained for a long period in an almost stationary state. In character it was Asiatic, though during the last three hundred years it has succumbed more to the influences of its geographical position.

In the Middle Ages the conditions of life in Western Europe were pretty uniform. There was hardly any education in the sense of book-learning, except among religious communities. Locomotion was difficult and dangerous, so that there was but scanty intercourse between the inhabitants of different parts of the same country. Fighting was the chief business of men, and manual work, skilled and unskilled, occupied women of all ranks.

In an age when war was so frequent, the civil duties of life were left to women, who fulfilled obligations that in more peaceful times fell to the lot of men. They not only had entire charge of the household, but shared largely in the operations of the field and the farm ; they were the spinners, the weavers, the brewsters, and the bakers. They frequently controlled the management of estates, and occasionally held public offices of trust and importance. There were no laws to prevent women from filling such positions, and the fittest came to the front unhampered by conventionality or arbitrary restrictions. But although women appear to have had a wider field of activity than they afterwards enjoyed, when social life became more complex, there was a counteracting influence which told against the development and free exercise of their energies. This was the influence of the Church.

It was the policy of the Church to keep women in a subordinate position. As long as they remained thoroughly convinced of their natural inferiority, and of the duty of subservience, they could be reckoned upon as valuable aids to the building up of the ecclesiastical power. The immense force of the religious and devotional spirit in woman was at the absolute disposal of her spiritual directors. At a time when there was no science, no art, and, for the majority, no literature, the power of the Church was incomparably greater than anything we can conceive of now.

The Church did not find it difficult to persuade women to accept the limits marked out for them. There was no public sentiment to set off against the power of the priest. Society was ruled by physical force; the law was weak, and the Church was women's shelter from the rudeness of an age when those who should have protected the defenceless were themselves the greatest offenders.

In order to enforce the doctrine of inferiority, the Church went further, and proclaimed that there was in woman a wickedness additional to the sin common to humanity. The "eternal feminine" was held before men's eyes as a temptation to be warred against. To fly from the presence of woman was to resist evil. Celibacy was a saintly virtue, and

family life a thing to be tolerated rather than approved. In the words of St. Chrysostom, woman was "a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill." The influence of the Fathers was not confined to their own age; their writings continued to affect the whole teaching of the Church, Anglican as well as Roman, which has always been in favour of the subordination of woman. She has been assigned a lower place in religious exercises, and has been excluded from the priestly office.

In successive periods of history the Church was largely responsible for the terrible persecutions inflicted upon women—and chiefly upon the poorest and most helpless—on the ground of witchcraft. Once having disseminated the theory of woman's inherent vice, it was only a natural corollary to impute to her both the desire and the power of working extraordinary mischief. The doctrine suited ages which believed not only in an embodied and omnipresent Power of Evil, but also in countless and multiform expressions of that power through natural objects and phenomena.

The Feudal System, which prevailed in England up to the middle of the fifteenth century, and in France up to a much later period, had a repressive

effect on women of the lower classes, though for women in the upper ranks it presented certain advantages. The women of the families of tenants on a feudal estate were regarded as chattels which went with the land. They were bound to the soil, and were fined if they either accepted work or married outside the lord's domain.

The age of chivalry had a twofold effect on the position of women. It created an ideal of womanhood which stirred the imagination and the poetic fancy. Chivalry had its sublime side. It was a protest against tyranny and vice; it inspired men to heroic deeds; it gave them a loftier conception of duty. It was the revulsion of noble minds from the coarseness, the unpitying indifference to wrong, and contempt for weakness, which characterized the Middle Ages. Like a new gospel, chivalry dawned upon a world in which the virtues of Paganism had declined, while its vices still triumphed.

But chivalry had another side. The pure reverence for woman passed into romantic admiration, into a worship of physical beauty, into mere passion. Woman, from being little less than a saint, became a toy. The teaching of the Church and the spirit of chivalry both acted adversely on the position of woman. By the one she was lowered below the level of humanity, by the other she was raised to

an ideal pinnacle, where it was impossible she could remain. The fault was the same in both cases. The priest and the knight removed woman from her natural place into a false position, endowing her with sub-human wickedness and superhuman excellencies.

With the Renaissance and the spread of education, social life underwent great changes. The Church was no longer the dominant influence. Great secular forces came into play; the tide of learning swept over Europe; commerce, travel, discoveries, inventions, caused old habits to be unlearnt. Thought, which had been stagnant, was freshened into a moving stream. In the intellectual re-birth, in the conflict of faiths, in the deadly political struggles which occupied the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England, we see how women were passing from the narrow life of the home into the wide life of the nation.

The great industrial revolution, which began in the last century, and has progressed with such rapid strides, has had its special bearing on the position of women. The material improvements brought about by machinery and developing trade, have lifted the middle-class woman out of the purely domestic sphere by lessening her household duties, and so leaving her free for other occupations. She has

ceased to be a producer. But the working woman has been simply drawn more and more from family life, to be absorbed into the ranks of outside workers. She is, in many cases, as much detached from the home as the man, by the necessity of wage-earning.

The educational revolution of modern times has also worked great changes in the position of women in England. It has specially affected the middle classes, who have been thereby enabled to enter with perfect freedom into the world of letters, to follow professional and business careers—in a word, to carve out for themselves an independent course. A new conception has arisen of what is woman's place in society. She now bears an active part in all the great movements—political, religious, philanthropic; her co-operation is sought in public work, and her presence welcomed, rather than resented, in all new social enterprises.

In the lighter side of life—in its recreations, which are now more in the nature of work than play—women have a much wider field than formerly, and take their pleasure as best suits them, without let or hindrance. They are free to act according to their necessities and tastes, wherever common sense and fitness lead them, without finding the barrier of sex laid across the path. Those who are afraid lest the world should suffer by women adopting modes of life

unsanctioned by tradition, may console themselves by remembering that Nature is stronger than fashion or opinion, and will at once make her voice heard whenever the lightest of her laws is transgressed.

The position of women in England cannot be regarded as an orderly evolution. It does not show unvarying progress from age to age. In one direction there has been improvement, in another deterioration. There have been breaks and gaps in the general advance, so that certain periods appear at a disadvantage in comparison with their predecessors. The last half-century shows very rapid and momentous changes. Never were such advantages placed within the reach of women; never were so many opportunities—social, literary, educational, commercial—open to them. But these advantages and opportunities would have been useless if women had not been ready, and shown their fitness for the new trusts. They have themselves largely created the public sentiment which now so strongly impels them towards wider action, and imposes on them greater responsibilities.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

PERIOD I.

WOMEN IN THE DAYS OF FEUDALISM.

CHAPTER I.

A MEDIÆVAL MANOR-HOUSE.

PAGE

Domestic life in the Middle Ages—Interior of a manor-house—Position and duties of the mistress—Household arrangements—Dame Paston and her daughters—Lady Joan Berkeley—The lady of the castle in time of war—Lady Pelham's defence of Pevensey Castle—Her letter to her husband 3

CHAPTER II.

LEARNING BEFORE THE DAYS OF THE PRINTING PRESS.

Learned ladies in Saxon times—Education of women in the Middle Ages—The rise of Grammar Schools—Want of provision for girls—Convent schools—Improvement of education in the fifteenth century—Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond, and her patronage of learning 17

CHAPTER III.

THE RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES.

The Feudal System unfavourable to the development of the middle classes—Subjection of women under Feudalism—Tyranny of feudal lords—Power of the Church—Rise of Commerce—Material progress—End of the Feudal System 26

CHAPTER IV.

WOMEN AND THE ANCIENT GILDS.

PAGE

The industrial equality of former days—Women as members of Gilds—Restrictions on trade—Fitness of girls for industrial occupations—Women as watchmakers: Sir John Bennett's opinion—The brewsters and ale-wives—Trade unions compared with the ancient Gilds—Influence of the Gilds—Equality of the sisteren and bretheren—Married women trading alone—Labour regulations applicable to men and women alike 39

CHAPTER V.

THE MEDIÆVAL NUN.

Dominance of the Church in the Middle Ages—The Conventual System—Occupations of the Nuns—Power of the Abbesses—Disputes between Religious Houses and the Laity—Latitude allowed to Nuns—Convents Educational Centres—Effects of the Suppression of Convents—Complaints of the Laity 56

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHURCH AS A SOCIAL FACTOR.

Influence of the Church on women in social life—The twofold conception of womanhood—Canon and Civil Law—Effect of ecclesiastical celibacy 85

CHAPTER VII.

ALMSGIVING IN OLDEN TIMES.

Almsgiving at the monasteries—Charity dispensed by private families—Bequests of ladies for the relief of the poor—Action of the Church—Change in the conception of the duty of almsgiving — Needlework for the poor — Modern gilds—Charity at the present day 100

PERIOD II.

ENGLAND AFTER THE RENAISSANCE.

CHAPTER I.

FAMILY LIFE AFTER THE FALL OF FEUDALISM.

PAGE

Effect on women of the fall of Feudalism—Characteristics of Tudor England—Observations of foreigners on English-women—Greater liberty allowed to women in England than on the Continent—Social habits and amusements—Women's education—English family life—Parents and children .. 113

CHAPTER II.

THE SCHOLARS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Revival of learning in the sixteenth century—Attitude of the nobility towards Letters and Arts—No age so productive of learned ladies—The Tudor princesses and Lady Jane Grey—Sir Anthony Coke's daughters—Mary Sidney—Learned women held in esteem—Learning confined to the upper classes—A sixteenth-century schoolmaster on women's education 126

CHAPTER III.

A LADY'S EDUCATION IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

Retrogression in the seventeenth century—Tone of women's education—Mrs. Hutchinson—Lady Ann Halkett—Mrs. Alice Thornton—Mrs. Makins—The Duchess of Newcastle—General estimation of learning—Changes in social life—Some patronesses of learning 145

CHAPTER IV.

GLIMPSES AT GREAT LADIES.

Changes in domestic life—Lady Elizabeth Howard's household at Naworth Castle—The Countess of Sunderland—The Belvoir Castle family—The Countess of Salisbury's suit—The Countess of Pembroke and the "boon hen"—Bess of Hardwicke—Court ladies—Lady Brilliana Harley—Lady Lucas—Match-making—Seizure of an heiress 155

CHAPTER V.

EVERY-DAY LIFE IN THE STUART PERIOD.

PAGE

Puritan influence—Neglect of women's education—The boarding-out system for girls—Sir Matthew Hale on the education of girls—Manners and customs—Diversions of great ladies—Rules for behaviour—John Evelyn on manners—Effects of the Civil War—Simplicity of home life—Lady Anne Halkett—Position of wives—A contemporary writer on husbands .. 173

CHAPTER VI.

PETITIONERS TO PARLIAMENT.

The city dames during the Civil War—They petition Parliament for peace—Reception of the petition—The military called out—Petition from tradesmen's wives for redress of grievances—Pym's reply—Women's memorial to Cromwell against imprisonment for debt—Sufferers during the Monmouth Rebellion—Petition against Judge Jeffreys—Hannah Hewling petitions the king 193

CHAPTER VII.

HEROINES OF THE CIVIL WAR.

Nature of the struggle—Position of Queen Henrietta Maria—Activity of women on both sides—Mrs. Hutchinson at Nottingham—Defence of Lathom House by the Countess of Derby—Lady Arundel at Wardour Castle—Lady Bankes besieged in Corfe Castle — Lady Lettice Digby defends Greashill Castle—Lady Fanshawe's visits to her husband in prison — Experiences of a gentlewoman in the West of England — Lady Musgrave and the Parliament — Lady Halkett assists the Duke of York to escape—Lady Rochester and the elections—The Jacobite rising—Flora McDonald .. 205

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MARTYR PERIODS: RELIGIOUS ZEAL AND RELIGIOUS APATHY.

PAGE

Religious life in the sixteenth century—Religion the great motive-power—The Lollard persecutions—Protestant martyrs of the sixteenth century—Anne Askew—Women martyrs in the seventeenth century — Persecution of the Quakeresses—Quaker doctrines—Seventeenth-century Anglicanism—Indifference of the Church to social work—Condition of the clergy — Mary Astell and her Protestant nunnery — The Countess of Warwick 235

CHAPTER IX.

WITCHCRAFT.

Universality of the belief in witchcraft—Persecution of witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—Attitude of the Puritans—Origin of the witch—First use of the term—Enactments against witchcraft—The Essex persecutions—The last judicial execution 261

CHAPTER X.

WOMEN AND THE ARTS.

Development of the arts in the seventeenth century—Introduction of women on the stage—Corruption of the period—Character of the drama—Wearing masks by spectators—The French company at Blackfriars Theatre—The first English company with women players—Famous actresses—English female artists in the Stuart period — Foundation of the Royal Academy of Arts—Angelica Kaufmann and Mary Moser elected members — Their career — Fanny Reynolds — Sir Joshua's opinion of his sister's work—Mrs. Cosway—Mrs. Carpenter—Character of eighteenth-century work—Women's place in musical art—Musical education in early times—Love of music in the sixteenth century—Instruments played by women—Music abolished by the Puritans—Musical maid-servants in the seventeenth century—The first English opera —Purcell's early work—Performance at a ladies' school .. 275

PERIOD III.

LIFE IN THE LAST CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

MATRONS AND MAIDS.

PAGE

Artificiality of eighteenth-century life—The *rôle* of the middle-class woman—Scotch domestic life—The old maid—Admiration of foreigners for English women—English dress—Public morals—Contrast between town and country life—A country lady in London—Racquets, routs, and drums—Education of girls—The boarding-school—Habits and manners of the middle class—Le Blanc's opinion of the English 307

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT LADY OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

London society in the last century—Lord Chesterfield on taste—Coarse language of great ladies—The speculation mania among ladies—Narrowness of fashionable life—Manners and amusements—Difficulties of social intercourse—The founders of Almack's Club—The passion for politics—Lady Mary Wortley Montagu on women's training—Some traits of eighteenth-century life 333

PERIOD I.

WOMEN IN THE DAYS OF FEUDALISM.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

WOMEN IN ENGLISH LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

A MEDIÆVAL MANOR-HOUSE.

Domestic life in the Middle Ages—Interior of a manor-house—Position and duties of the mistress—Household arrangements—Dame Paston and her daughters—Lady Joan Berkeley—The lady of the castle in time of war—Lady Pelham's defence of Pevensey Castle—Her letter to her husband.

To those living in the hurry and bustle of modern existence, there are few pictures so attractive as that of a stately manor-house in olden times. Its seclusion and calm, the solidity, regularity, and simplicity of its daily life, are a soothing contrast to the noise and complexity of the common round in the present day. We are accustomed to think of the Middle Ages as a period of strife, of rude commotions, with a generally unsettled state of society. It was so, but with it all there was a

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

great peace which this generation knoweth not. Fighting and brawling there was in plenty. Life was cheap, property insecure; every man was his own policeman; quarrels meant blows, and might was right. But the very causes which produced this state of society created also an opposite condition of things. Bad roads, lack of communication, which made it possible for deeds of violence to pass unpunished, kept the knowledge of those deeds hidden from the community at large. Life went on in quiet corners undisturbed by the thought of evil and misfortune close at hand. There was no responsive throb of feeling between one town and another, no electric thrill passing from country-side to country-side. Each place lived its life comparatively apart. To-day a touch on any of our great centres of life is felt throughout the kingdom. In mediæval times England was not a whole, but a conglomeration of communities, each with an independent existence.

The manor-house was essentially a self-contained domain. Even the best of country roads were so indifferent that a town a few miles off was not much more than a name to most of the occupants of the manor-house. What were called high-roads were merely tracks along which waggons were dragged with the utmost difficulty. The house itself,

embowered in trees on low-lying ground or sheltering against the breast of a hill, was in its isolation both defenceless and secure. Generally, it had a palisade or outer fence to form a protection against assault. That a house of any pretensions should be something in the nature of a stronghold was necessary in those days.

The upper story was reserved for the lady and her maidens. It was the part most protected, and was sometimes strengthened further by the placing of heavy doors at short intervals on the staircase which led to this portion of the house. Originally consisting of only one apartment called the solar, this upper floor was gradually enlarged until it comprised several sleeping-rooms, the hall becoming more and more a place for dining and receiving guests and transacting business, while the real family life was lived upstairs. Mediæval manners necessitated some retreat where the women-folk would not be exposed to contact with any passing stranger who might claim hospitality. It seems, however, to have been customary for the lady of the house to sit with her lord, or, in his absence, to preside at the dinner or supper taken in the hall. Her place was at the upper end, away from the entrance, and only privileged guests would be permitted to sit close to her. There was a full

acknowledgment of the wife's social position. To women of rank and station the feudal system brought certain advantages. Every feudal lord was a kind of princeling, and his wife shared his dignities. The state kept up in the feudal castle and in the mediæval manor-house gave the wife considerable importance. As far as social duties went, husband and wife acted as partners, receiving and entertaining the guests together. The unsettled times, which so often kept the lord from his own roof, brought the lady into prominence as sole guardian of the family possessions and interests. She was hedged round with a little circle of ceremony. A great lady always had a body-guard of maidens who lived under the eye of their mistress, while the lord had a similar contingent of pages or squires. It was a general custom in feudal times, and even somewhat later, for the daughters and sons of good families to be sent to live in the household of some knight or gentleman to be instructed in all the arts pertaining to their station. Feudal etiquette required that a great lady should be personally served by ladies of rank. With this personal service was combined training in all domestic accomplishments which it was necessary for a well-bred maiden to acquire. The English fashion of

sending children from home was commented on by foreigners as a proof of the lack of parental affection. It was a fashion that was in full vogue in the middle of the fifteenth century. In 1469, Dame Margaret Paston writes to her son, Sir John Paston, about his sister Margery—

"I wuld ye shuld purvey for yur suster to be with my Lady of Oxford, or with my Lady of Bedford, or in sume other wurchepfull place, wher as ye thynk best, and I wull help to her fyndyng, for we be eyther of us werye of other."

Dame Paston's blunt letter seems to bear out the charge brought against English parents.

A knight's lady was like the mistress of a boarding-school, and a very stern mistress she often proved to be. Rank and birth did not exempt her pupils from strict discipline and hard work. While their brothers were learning to ride and to wrestle, to shoot, and to handle the battle-axe, to sing and to learn to bear themselves gallantly like gentlemen, the maidens were being initiated into the mysteries of weaving, spinning, brewing, distilling, salting, and many other processes which were then performed by each family for itself. To these occupations was added needlework of all kinds, from the making of plain serviceable smocks and cloaks to embroidering banners and altar-cloths;

for all wearing apparel, as well as everything required for household use, was manufactured and made up at home. If the male members of the establishment were numerous, a busy time the lady and her maidens must have had. Well might the poet write—

"Mult doit fame estre chier tenue
Par li est tout gent vestue.
Bien sai que fame file et œuvre
Les dras dont l'en se vest et cuevre

"Et toissus d'or et drap de soie
Et por ce dis-je où que je soie,
A toz cels qui orront cest conte,
Que de fame ne dient honte." *

No doubt the coarser kinds of work, such as the clothes for dependants, were given out to the servants; but every young gentlewoman had to learn the process, so as to be able in her turn to superintend a household. Tailors were also employed for the making of both women's and men's garments. In royal households there were regular

* The translation runs thus :—

"Much ought woman to be held dear;
By her is everybody clothed.
Well know I that woman spins and manufactures
The cloths with which we dress and cover ourselves,

"And gold tissues, and cloth of silk;
And therefore say I, wherever I may be,
To all those who shall hear this story
That they say no ill of womankind."

tailors who made feminine as well as masculine garments. A tailor was called a cissor. In the time of Edward I., the King, the Queen, and the Prince of Wales each had their separate tailors.

There were large establishments of celibate priests, like that of Bishop Swinfield who lived in the thirteenth century, where no female servants were permitted to enter, and men performed all the domestic work. Unless the nuns of some neighbouring convent were employed in working for these semi-monastic households, there must have been a supply of masculine weavers and spinners. Curiously enough, the only in-door employment in these priests' houses for which female labour was engaged was that of brewing. The brewing was always exclusively in the hands of women, and it is thought possible that even in ecclesiastical establishments the old custom was followed.

In the Middle Ages it was not usual for women to be employed about the royal palaces except to attend on the queen and princesses. In France, says Meiners, in his "History of the Female Sex"—

"When the kings lived apart from their consorts, they had in their palaces no persons of the female sex, except a few of those menials whose services are indispensably necessary in every family, such as washerwomen, needle-

women, etc., and even these were removed by Philip the Fair from his court. In like manner the palaces and apartments of the queens and princesses were inaccessible to all persons of the other sex, except the *maître de l'hotel* and the knights or esquires who mounted guard before the doors and chambers of the princesses. At table, in rising and going to bed, in undressing and dressing, queens and princesses were attended only by their women and maids; and this ancient practice was retained by the queens of France so late as the sixteenth century."

But to return to the manor-house. A great lady, who had to superintend and take an active share in the *making* only of the clothes for the household, would in these days feel herself very hardly pressed, especially if she were also expected to be her own housekeeper and see to the good ordering of the kitchen. But if she had also to manufacture material and to preside over all those initial processes of which she now sees nothing but the results, life would seem an intolerable burden. It was not so thought in mediæval times. It is true that in noblemen's houses there was a steward, whose business it was to provide the household with necessaries. In the Berkeley family, which may be taken as a typical case, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the steward was accustomed to order, either monthly or quarterly, certain quantities of provisions to be supplied from

the manors and farms belonging to the estate. But the lady of the house exercised a general superintendence. Joan, the wife of Thomas, third Lord Berkeley, who lived in the reign of Edward III., is described as—

"a vertuous lady and great huswife and a wise overseer of such household affayres as were proper to her sex and government. . . . When shee came to theis farm-houses (as often shee did) to oversee or take accompt of her dairy affaires, shee oftentimes spent in provisions at a meale there the valewe of 4*d.* and 4*d.* ob. [4½*d.* about] whereof allowance was afterwards given to the Accomptant before her husband's Auditor at the end of the year. And some tymes also a cheese of two pound weight was at such a tyme spent by her attendants. And in such huswifely courses this virtuous Lady spent a part of her aged and weake yeares untill her death."

There was a dignity attached to manual labour which is exemplified in the use of the word "spinster." It was a term of which women were proud. We now confine it to unmarried women, but as late as the sixteenth century it was used by married women of the better class. A gentlewoman who married a man of inferior rank claimed the title of spinster as a sign of her good birth and gentle breeding.

Life was, however, by no means all work for the ladies of the manor-house. There was time and to spare for lighter employments and diversions. We

hear a great deal of games, especially of chess, in the households of people of rank, and the number of so-called chamber games shows that the ladies had many hours for recreation. There was dancing too, and lute-playing, and a little conning over ballads and romances. For although the *damoiseaux* frequently could not sign their names, and found it hard work to spell out the words of the breviary, the *demoiselles*, if they were not very skilful with the quill, were fairly proficient in the art of reading, which was more cultivated by women than by men.

In the intervals between needlework and housewifery, there would be strolling in the garden on fine days, weaving garlands of flowers—a favourite mediæval pastime; and in summer weather, when the lanes were passable, rambles outside the domain and occasional rides. It is easy to understand how much more essential was the garden to the enjoyment of the women-folk in days when outdoor exercise was comparatively difficult. There would be a little visiting among the dependents in the hamlet, and for the lady herself, in cold wet seasons, a great dispensing of herbal medicines for rheums and ague. At all times there were the doles to the poor, gifts which were thought due from the great house. Religious observances occupied a portion of each day, though the length

and number of these depended on the character of the inmates. Still, there would be certain outward forms of devotion to be gone through in almost all large households. Few great ladies were so punctilious in their devotions as the Princess Cecil, mother of Edward IV., who used to rise at seven o'clock and say matins with her chaplain. After that she heard a low mass in her chamber. A little later in the morning, when the slight breakfast had been partaken of, she would go to the chapel to hear divine service and two low masses. She said evensong with her chaplain, and then went again to chapel.

In ordinary households the saints' days would be observed, the great fasts kept, and mass heard at regular intervals. Sometimes the abbot of the neighbouring monastery would pay what might be called a pastoral visit to the lord and lady of the manor, accompanied by some of his monks, mounted on mules, accustomed to pace the rough or miry roads. Besides these clerical visitors, there would be strangers to be entertained every now and then, and if they were of high degree, the lady herself would see that their wants were supplied, and would sup and converse with them.

Life in the mediæval manor-house, though it was a life much secluded from the noise and bustle

of the world, was one full of activity and varied occupation. There were so many necessary duties that must be performed, that the absence of entertainment and of the pleasures of art and literature was not felt. The horizon was limited. Interests were concentrated within a narrow compass, but what is unknown is not missed. For the women the manor-house was the world. It is recorded as a merit on the part of Lady Joan Berkeley (mentioned above), that in the forty-two years of her married life she never travelled ten miles from her husband's houses in Somerset and Gloucester, "much less humered herselfe with the vaine delightes of London and other cities." If a great lady like the wife of Thomas Lord Berkeley lived so circumscribed an existence, it is easy to imagine how small was the circle of women of less degree. But this limited area of thought and activity does not seem to have been a bad nursery. Writing of the fifteenth century, Sir James Ramsay says—

> "If we are led to form an unfavourable opinion of the male aristocracy of the period, far otherwise is it with regard to the ladies. Whether as wives, sisters, or daughters, their letters create most favourable impressions."

In feudal times it was not all noble ladies who could live in peace and seclusion in their homes, protected from strife and rude alarms. The châtelaine

was often called upon to take supreme command in her lord's absence, and if trouble arose and the castle were attacked, the mistress was not only the nominal but the actual head of affairs. We do not find in those days that women shut themselves up and declined to interfere because they did not understand politics. On the contrary, they responded to the need with alacrity. The great lady put down her embroidery-needle and took up the sword when danger threatened. She did not fasten herself up in the solarium with her maidens, but took the command of the household.

A notable heroine in the Wars of the Roses was Lady Joan Pelham, wife of Sir John Pelham, Constable of Pevensey Castle. In 1399 Sir John was in Yorkshire with Henry Duke of Lancaster, fighting against Richard II. Lady Joan, left in Pevensey Castle, was fiercely attacked by the Yorkist forces from Sussex, Kent, and Surrey. The castle was in great danger, and there was much difficulty also in obtaining provisions. The long letter which she wrote to her husband during the siege has the additional interest of being the earliest letter extant written by an English lady.

"MY DERE LORD,

"I recommande me to yowr hie Lordesehippe wyth hert and body and all my pore myght, and wyth all

this I think zou, as my dere Lorde, derest and best yloved off all earthlyche Lordes ; I say for me and thanke yhow my dere Lorde, with all thys that I say before, off your comfortable lettre, that ze send me fron Pownefraite that com to me on Mary Magdaleyn day ; ffor by my trowth I was never so gladd as when I herd by your lettre that ye warr stronge ynogh wyth the grace off God for to kepe yow fro the malyce of your ennemys. And dere Lorde iff it lyk to your hyee Lordeshippe that als ye myght, that smyght her off your gracious spede whych God Allmyghty contynue and encresse. And my dere Lorde, if is lyk zow for to know off my ffare, I am here by layd in a manner off a sege, wyth the counte of Sussex, Sudray, and a greet parsyll off Kentte ; so that I ne may nogth out, nor none vitayles gette me, bot with myche hard. Wharfore my dere if it lyk zow, by the awyse off zowr wyse counsell, for to sett remadye off the salvation off yhower castell & wt. stand the malyce off ther sehures foresayde. And also that ye be fullyehe enformede off there grett malyce wyker's in these schyres whyche yt haffes so dispytffuly wrogth to zow, and to zowl castell, to zhowr men, and to zuor tenaunts ffore this cuntree, have yai wastede for a grett whyle. Farewell my dere Lorde, the Holy Trinyte zow kepe fro zour ennemys and son send me gud tythyngs off yhow. Ywryten at Pevensay in the castell, on Saynt Jacobe day last past.

"By yhowr awnn pore, J. Pelham.

"To my trew Lorde."

CHAPTER II.

LEARNING BEFORE THE DAYS OF THE PRINTING PRESS.

Learned ladies in Saxon times—Education of women in the Middle Ages—The rise of Grammar Schools — Want of provision for girls—Convent schools—Improvement of education in the fifteenth century—Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond, and her patronage of learning.

It might seem superfluous to discuss the subject of education in periods when reading and writing were the accomplishments of but a fraction of the population, while to speak of learning seems altogether an anomaly. As has already been noted, writing was a rare accomplishment up to the tenth century. At the time of the Norman invasion, there were probably few laymen who could spell out a breviary. Yet even under the Saxon kings, when there was such a dearth of knowledge among the people and a scarcity of all literature, there was a thread of scholarship running through the nation among the Monastic Orders. Although the

foundations of learning had been laid, the building went on slowly. Strange as it appears, there was not only among men, but among women, a zest for study in the far-off days of the Saxon monk Aldhelm, who wrote for his female pupils his work, "De Laude Virginitatis."

Times that were in most respects very unfavourable for the pursuit of letters produced students and scholars of no mean capacity. The seclusion in which monks dwelt by choice and women by necessity, gave opportunity for studies that would have been neglected under less rude conditions. Saxon ladies varied the monotony of their domestic occupations by the study of Latin, which they not only read, but wrote with tolerable fluency.

Latin was then the great vehicle of knowledge. It was the language of law, the medium of correspondence between scholars. Most of the accessible literature was in Latin. It was, therefore, to the study of that language above all else that students betook themselves. The learned ladies of the sixteenth century had their forerunners in the women of the seventh and eighth, in the studious Abbess Eadburga and her pupil Leobgitha, with both of whom the celebrated St. Boniface, called the Apostle of Germany, corresponded in Latin.

At that period learning was so closely associated with religion, that the Church was the nursery of scholars. The acquirements of the Saxon ladies were due to their connection with the religious orders. It was in the priories and convents that the arts of reading and copying manuscripts, of writing and composition were cultivated. So exclusively was learning the monopoly of the Church, that in the Middle Ages the study of books was but an inconsiderable part of a gentleman's education.

With women the case was somewhat different. Their enforced seclusion in days of rude manners led them to sedentary occupations. They were frequently the only members of the family who could read with any ease. As long as war was the chief business and out-door sports the chief pastime of men, the quieter lives of the women gave them the advantage in point of learning.

But with the Renaissance a change crept in. The education of men began to improve, while that of the women was left as before. When William of Wykeham founded his school at Winchester in 1373, he thought only of boys. Henry VI. did not propose to admit girls to his foundation at Eton. All the great schools which rose up in the sixteenth century, Rugby, Harrow, Westminster, St. Paul's, and the rest, were confined to the male

sex. The universities, though owing much to the beneficence of women in early times, have, until recently, not only done nothing for the advancement of women's education, but thrown stumbling-blocks in its way.

In education, as in everything else, the rich, of course, had the advantage. Sir Nicholas Bacon, in the reign of Elizabeth, introduced some reforms into the education of wards. There were—

"articles devised for the bringing up in vertue and learning of the Queenes Majesties Wardes, being heires males and whose landes descending in possession and coming to the Queenes Majestie shall amount to the cleere yearly value of c. markes or above."

Girls were put into wardship, too, but the Lord Keeper does not seem to have thought any reforms were needed in their education.

It is not surprising to find that the girls of the poorer classes were often much neglected. A contemporary writer, speaking of the women of England, says—

"This nevertheless I utterlie mislike in the poorer sort of them, for the wealthier doo sildome offend herein: that being of themselves without competent wit they are so carelesse in the education of their children (wherein their husbands also are to be blamed) by means whereof verie manie of them neither fearing God, neither regarding either manners or obedience, do oftentimes come to confusion

which (if anie correction or discipline had beene used toward them in youth) might have proved good members of their common-wealth and countrie by their good service and industrie."

The children of the poor could not have profited much by the free education of the convent schools, for they began to earn their living as soon as they were able to use their hands. There was plenty of "discipline" in their bringing up, but not much regard paid to "manners" or learning.

The custom among the well-to-do classes of sending their children to live in the houses of the nobility prevailed all through the Middle Ages and up to the sixteenth century. Among the laity it was a recognized mode of education. The kind of training which the girls, under this system, received depended on the character and acquirements of the lady of the house. The primary things to be learnt were good manners and domestic arts. Books were very scarce, and, except in religious houses, there would be few persons who could make use of them. Even at the end of the fifteenth century it was unusual for a gentleman to be able to read and write.* There were, of course, the schools attached to monasteries and convents where all classes were taught, and in good families tutors were employed

* Warton, "History of English Poetry."

for both girls and boys, such men as Elmer, Bishop of London, Roger Ascham, Walter de Biblesworth, and others notable for learning, acting in that capacity in the households of the nobility. The curriculum at the convents included English, Latin, music, and grammar. The majority of noblemen's and gentlemen's daughters are said to have attended the convent schools. A custom prevailed for these young gentlewomen to wear white veils, to distinguish them from professed nuns, who wore black, which implies that all the pupils were resident in the convents. It was not uncommon for the religious houses to be used as boarding establishments. At some places ladies were received as inmates of a conventual household, bringing their own servants to attend upon them, and to a great extent living apart from the nuns.

With regard to women's education, there seem to have been periods of enlightenment alternating with periods of darkness. In Saxon days, in the seventh and eighth centuries especially, the study of letters occupied a good deal of the attention of women. But while the Norman and Saxon were struggling into unity, education everywhere seems to have been at a low ebb.

Women did not profit much by the literary renaissance of the age of Chaucer. It is said that

the daughters of John of Gaunt, who was father to Henry IV., were the first English ladies who could write (the Saxon abbesses and their pupils are ignored in this statement), while the earliest letter extant written by a woman in English is said to have been the notable epistle, already quoted, sent by Lady Joan Pelham in 1399 to her husband, relating her troubles during her gallant defence of Pevensey Castle.*

By the middle of the fifteenth century, however, some improvement is noticeable. If writing were such a rare accomplishment as to add lustre to the family of John of Gaunt, the grand-daughter of that illustrious begetter of kings was celebrated for the keen interest she took in books, and was herself an author. Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII., was a noted woman of learning, though her interest for later generations lies more in the part she played in history. She was a woman of great intellectual ability, and had been most carefully trained. Printing was then a new art, and the Countess of Richmond, to give her the title by which she is best known, was a warm patroness of Caxton's partner, Wynkyn de Worde, whom she appointed as her special printer. The countess was a very great lady, and had her

* See p. 15.

printer, her poet, her band of minstrels, just as she had her resident confessor and her domestic retinue. She ordered several works to be printed, and did much to foster a taste for literature among the ladies of the court.

Her bent of mind was distinctly religious, and in her later years she regulated her establishment on monastic lines, and lived a life of conventual strictness. In her secluded manor-house, situated in the Hundred of Woking, her principal visitor was the abbot of the neighbouring monastery of Newark, who from time to time ambled along the ill-kept road with a train of monks all mounted on mules to confer with this powerful but dutiful daughter of the Church. In the picturesquely shaded house, which is still well preserved and retains much of its old-world air, the countess could pursue her reading and meditations undisturbed, and it was probably here that she composed her religious books. Her early studies enabled her to enjoy such literature as was accessible. She was well acquainted with Latin and French, but there is no mention of Greek or Hebrew.

We must skip the two next generations, and go on to the great grand-daughters of the Countess of Richmond before we find the dead languages

assuming an important place in the curriculum of a woman's education. There were very few books accessible to the laity in the days of Margaret of Richmond, but she lived long enough to see the means of knowledge multiplying fast, and to assist in the process.

The intellectual gifts and literary attainments of her grandson, Henry VIII., augured well for the progress of learning in England, and the countess, who died the year that Henry was crowned, was thus spared the pain of witnessing the crimes which stained his after career. The mental energy which characterised all the Tudors seems to have had its fountain-head in their distinguished ancestress, whose position exposed her to many trials and dangers, through which her strength of mind, steadiness of purpose, and nobility of character carried her unscathed. Some ills might have been averted from England had Margaret Beaufort been alive during the reign of her grandson. And what a brilliant leader she would have made of that group of learned ladies who adorned the second half of the sixteenth century!

CHAPTER III.

THE RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES.

The Feudal System unfavourable to the development of the middle classes—Subjection of women under Feudalism—Tyranny of feudal lords—Power of the Church—Rise of commerce—Material progress—End of the Feudal System.

UNTIL the development of England as a manufacturing country, the strength and importance of the middle classes were not felt. They came into power contemporaneously with the growth of trade and commerce. It was the thriving burgesses who made England feared by other nations, for it was they who equipped her fleets and replenished empty exchequers. It has often been remarked that in no other country in Europe is there a middle class corresponding to the middle class in England. In no other country is the middle class such a powerful factor in national life. Whether it will retain its power is doubtful. The blows aimed by socialism at the upper classes are felt by those below. For every large landowner who is attacked on the

score of undue wealth, there are a hundred small property-holders who will bend under the strain put upon their resources. Ground rents are not all in the hands of the nobility, and employers of labour are not all battening on enormous profits. It is the middle classes whom the socialistic portion of the democracy wish to reduce to a condition of insecurity, and whose energies they are trying to paralyze.

The feudal system was unfavourable to the growth of the middle classes. It savoured too much of absolutism. Energy was cramped. Individual effort was possible only within certain limits. In the feudal ages people cared more for protection than for freedom. They bowed to the sovereignty of the feudal lord, and were dependent on his bounty. The services which they were obliged to render prevented them from straying into new paths, and the conditions under which they lived made independent action impossible. It was not until the feudal system was broken down that there was a free course for the development of the middle classes. In the first four centuries after the coming of the Normans, it is the aristocracy who are the history-makers. Roughly speaking, there are only two classes to be considered: the nobles and the serfs—for such the lower classes remained in all the

important relations of life—and until the arts of civilization have made some progress, until the resources of the country have been brought into play and foreign commerce has grown into importance, the life of the populace is a somewhat monotonous tale.

It has been stated that feudalism raised woman to a higher place in domestic life; that, whereas before she was in a state of subjection, under the feudal system she exercised independent power. Undoubtedly, as a wife woman was a gainer. The mantle of authority with which her husband was invested, fell upon her whenever he was temporarily absent. The *ménage* of a feudal household certainly gave the lady of the house a dignity, and imposed upon her responsibilities which secured her respect and gave her freedom of action. She was called upon to direct a little army of subordinates, and was her husband's partner and equal. But this improvement in the status of women is not discernible, except in the governing classes. The women without title, rank, position, wealth, the women of every-day life, profited little. They shared in the subjection of their fathers, brothers, and husbands, and they enjoyed none of the privileges which the feudal system conferred on their more highly placed sisters. In a state of society where

the mass of the people were in a dependent position, it was not likely that any special freedom would be granted to or even claimed by women. And in an age when the worship of force was dominant, their physical inferiority told heavily against them. Under feudalism there was no sort of independence possible to women who were not born to wealth or rank.

Women were under a two-fold sovereignty—that of the feudal lord and of their male relatives. No woman in any position of life could be said to be a free agent. If she were a great heiress, she was disposed of in marriage as best suited the king and his council without regard to her wishes. In the case of a vassal's daughter, the consent of the feudal lord must be obtained to her marriage. Every tenant paid a sum of money to the lord on the marriage of his daughter, and this tax was even levied in the case of grand-daughters. The price was fixed by the manorial courts. A couple could not be betrothed without the permission of their feudal lord, and if they failed to obtain his consent they were subject to a fine.

In France, when feudalism was at its height, the birth of a daughter was regarded as a calamity, from the sovereign downwards. Louis XI., who refused even to admit into his presence his

daughter, Jeanne de Valois, during the first four years of her life, and ferociously struck at her with his sword when she chanced one day to come into view, represents in an exaggerated form the sentiment of the peasant, who, if he had no sons, would say, "Je n'ai pas d'enfants, je n'ai que des filles."

Feudal England did not express herself so strongly, but a dowerless daughter was felt to be a heavy burden, and a daughter with a portion was treated simply as a marketable commodity.

On the labouring classes the tyranny of the feudal system pressed grievously A licence had to be bought to go outside the bounds of the lord of the manor to obtain work. For instance, an orphan girl, in the reign of Edward III., paid sixpence for the privilege of serving and marrying "wheresoever and whensoever she pleases." * A woman living on the estate of a feudal lord was regarded as, in a manner, his property. If she married a stranger and left the manor, the lord was entitled to compensation, as being deprived of part of his "live stock."

All through the Middle Ages it was the aim of the government to keep the people on the land, to prevent the agricultural population from quitting the rural districts. No father who could not show

* Denton, "England in the Fifteenth Century."

an income of £20 a year in land or rent might apprentice his son or daughter to any trade. This effectually cut off the chances of the majority of the working class from migrating to the towns. The system, unworkable as it appears, did not die out until the sixteenth century.

Powerful as was the Church in the Middle Ages, it was not able to protect women outside the shade of the cloister. And it will be readily understood how great was the influence of the priest in an age when the mass of the people were so little able to think and judge for themselves; in an age when belief in the supernatural encompassed daily life with terrors, when the common laws of nature were dim mysteries, when disease and misfortune were ascribed to the malevolence of witches and evil spirits. The Church was the supreme arbiter, and to question her decrees was to incur the risk of eternal misery. The powers of evil could only be exorcised by holy water and priestly aid, and lapses into sin were atoned for by substantial offerings. It was easy to persuade women, always more susceptible than men to the emotional and imaginative side of religion, that their dreams and fancies were divine warnings. In that quaint collection of fourteenth-century maxims known as the "Book of the Knight of Latour Landry," the story is related

of a young wife who was induced to desert her husband for a lover, and fell sick. She had a vision of a fiery pit, which a priest interpreted to signify the abode of lost spirits, into which she would have been plunged but for her piety in supporting one hundred priests to say masses for the souls of her parents, and in dispensing charity among the poor.

But if the Church tyrannized over the people and took advantage of their ignorance, it was a great uplifting and civilizing power in their lives. But for the Church the Middle Ages would been one dark night of un-illumined barbarism. The Church summed up in herself all that existed of knowledge and culture. It was the symbol of order, progress, and learning. In time of war it was a haven of peace. It was the Church that enabled women to live secure, sheltered lives in the midst of turmoils and danger. It was the guardian of the people's consciences, and possessed over them a power of life and death.

Looked at from a lighter side, the Church was a potent factor in every-day life. Her festivals were one of the chief recreations of the people. To women especially, whose diversions were fewer than those of men, the feast-days, with their processions and ceremonials, were welcome excitements. In the services of the Church women

found an outlet for the gratification of the æsthetic sense which nothing else afforded. If the main features of social life in the Middle Ages be remembered—the sordidness of the dwellings, the absence of everything beyond the barest necessaries in the majority of homes, the lack of indoor recreations, and of all the resources of modern times afforded by the means of locomotion—it will not appear strange that the Church as a social force should have wielded such power.

The rise of the middle classes was the rise of a power antagonistic to the Church. It was the beginning of the revolt against constituted authority. It foreshadowed the strife between reason and dogma. All the movements that have arisen against the power of the Church have come from the middle classes. The spirit of inquiry which led men to question the claims of an infallible priesthood, and culminated in the breakdown of the power of the Roman Catholic Church in England, had its birth among the middle classes. The modern scientific movement, to which the Anglican Church has been so bitterly opposed, started from the same source. The battle for freedom of worship, whether fought by Anglicans against Romanists, or by Dissenters against Anglicans, has been mainly carried on by members of the middle classes.

After the fall of feudalism, in the period immediately preceding the Reformation, the extension of commerce was raising the middle classes into power. New paths were opening out, and as riches were more diffused and intercourse between different parts of the country and with other nations became easier, the influence of the Church was weakened. It became less dominant as new interests arose.

It was in this period that a remarkable step was taken among women of the middle class—a step which shows that their interest in public affairs was very keen. A number of city dames drew up a petition to Parliament and presented it in person. It was not the stimulus of private interest or the sharp spur of national calamity that sent them to the doors of the legislature. It is a significant fact that it was an affront offered to a woman which stirred the citizens' wives to action in the year 1429, when that unfortunate kinglet, the puppet of his party, Henry VI., was nominally reigning. The Duke of Gloucester's matrimonial concerns were creating a good deal of agitation. He had put away his wife, the Countess Jacqueline of Hainault, daughter of William IV., Count of Holland, and widow of the Dauphin John, and set in her place Eleanor Cobham. The good citizenesses were full

of righteous wrath. They resolved to present a remonstrance to the House of Lords.

"One Mistress Stokes, with divers other stout women of London, of good account and well apparelled, came openly to the Upper House of Parliament and delivered letters to the Duke of Gloucester, to the Archbishop, and other lords there present, containing matters of rebuke and sharp reprehension to the said Duke of Gloucester because he would not deliver his wife Jacqueline out of her grievous imprisonment, being then detained prisoner by the Duke of Burgundy, and suffering her to remain unkindly whilst he kept another adulteress contrary to the law of God and the honourable estate of matrimony."

These city dames, who probably were not very facile with their pen, who had no newspapers to read, no clubs or societies at which to discuss public matters, who were, doubtless, much occupied with the affairs of their household, were so moved by the iniquity being perpetrated upon one of their own sex, that they could not forbear taking action. There must have been much indignant gossip between good Mistress Stokes and her neighbours. The outrage on the wifely dignity of Countess Jacqueline appealed to their inmost feelings. They were all women of the thriving, comfortable middle class, as the description implies, "stout women," and "well apparelled," whose husbands would be citizens of good standing. Or perhaps some of

them were women trading on their own account, wool-staplers and merchants, as was not uncommon in those times. They felt, as all good citizenesses should, that they had part and lot in the affairs of the kingdom, and did not think it "going out of their sphere" to express their opinion on a matter of the gravest import. But it was a bold thing to interfere in the affairs of a peer of the realm, one of royal blood, and to go up in person to the House of Lords, especially for petitioners who by their rank and connections could not command special attention, who had neither husbands, brothers, nor friends in the august assembly to which they appealed. The personal element, which was so manifest in the political women of the eighteenth century, was absent.

With the growth of the commercial movement and the increase of material prosperity, society was gradually reconstituted. As feudalism declined, so did chivalry. The artificial view of life which it engendered faded away. The commercial instinct, so strong in the English people, began to override other impulses.

As England emerged from its commercial insignificance, an improvement naturally took place in the material conditions of domestic life. Luxuries that had hitherto belonged exclusively to the

aristocracy, were introduced into the homes of the middle classes. Houses were better furnished, dress became more sumptuous, the table was better provided. Indeed, the quality of the food was in advance of the other conditions of life. With the growth of towns was created a more marked difference between the rural and urban population. The burgher's wife who had glass windows to her house and went to church in a silken hood, felt herself on a different plane from the farmer's wife with her shuttered lattices and linen coif. The trading class naturally lived an in-door life, and became sensitive to hardships endured without question by the agricultural class. Women who dwelt in cities fell into a different groove of occupations and amusements from their rural sisters, whom they began to regard with some disdain. Field and farm work were looked upon with a little scorn by women who had been brought up in the more sheltered atmosphere of town life. The dance on the village green and the harvest revels were superseded for town dwellers by feasts and shows.

There were hardly any books in the houses even of prosperous traders, whose literature was confined to their account-books. As for the women, they were busy enough with their household affairs, and

sought their recreation in a gossip with their neighbours. Few of them ever wrote a letter or found any use for a pen. Even to this day there are good housewives in country districts who would be puzzled to make out a receipt or cast up a column of figures.

In the fourteenth century there were few persons outside the ranks of the clergy who could write. There was a considerable improvement in the following century, which affords a convenient starting-point from which to commence the study of town life.* Letter-writing was becoming usual among the well-to-do of the middle classes, those who would now be called the gentry. Education was spreading. The gulf between the aristocracy and the democracy was being bridged over by a thriving, intelligent middle class. As we approach the sixteenth century, the old manner of life is fast seen to be disappearing. The castle is no longer the power that it was once. The sovereignty of the nobles is weakened, in many cases completely shattered, and the system of tyrannical protection on the one side and slavish dependence on the other passes away.

* Mrs. A. S. Green, "Town Life in the Fifteenth Century."

CHAPTER IV.

WOMEN AND THE ANCIENT GILDS.

The industrial equality of former days—Women as members of Gilds—Restrictions on trade—Fitness of girls for industrial occupations — Women as watchmakers: Sir John Bennett's opinion—The brewsters and ale-wives—Trade unions compared with the ancient Gilds—Influence of the Gilds—Equality of the sisteren and bretheren—Married women trading alone—Labour regulations applicable to men and women alike.

THE records of the industrial history of England reveal one anomaly which is by no means cheering to those who are striving to improve the economic position of women. It cannot be gainsaid that in periods before the labour question began to be scientifically discussed, there was a juster conception of the relations which should subsist between the sexes in the common affairs of daily life. Men and women were treated on a par. When labour laws were enacted they were enacted for both alike; it was assumed that the sexes stood on an equality. With one or two exceptions, there was no especial legislation for women. Nor was there any

hindrance, either in theory or in actuality, to women trading and engaging in industrial occupations. A woman was not debarred from any commercial pursuit simply by reason of sex. Whatever work she was able to undertake she carried through without having to surmount artificial barriers set up by prejudice and by the action of those interested in the restriction of women's industrial liberty.

At the present day women have to fight their way into the commercial world, and every fresh step which they make towards independence is hailed as a triumph, and a hopeful sign for the future; or as a retrograde step, a deplorable and dangerous departure, according to the views of the onlookers; but in all cases as something abnormal, to be commented upon and criticized. The general opinion in the first half of this century was that women and business were things apart, and better kept separate. Either it was assumed that women knew nothing about business and could never learn, or that if they did edge their way in they would be thrusting men out.

It does not appear that in the past such views were entertained, that women were considered to be going out of their "sphere" when they entered the world of trade, or that it was attempted to deny

them any of the privileges which might attach to commercial pursuits. The women took their places quite naturally side by side with the men, and no one saw anything strange in the position. They could receive apprentices; they became members of trade gilds, worked at various industries; in short, played their part as full members of the industrial community. It has been remarked that "great changes in the *status* of woman and in the *status* of labour have been correlative and often contemporaneous." This is exemplified in the revolution brought about by the factory system, which altered the whole conditions of domestic life for large numbers of women in the lower ranks. The greater freedom which women enjoyed in olden times in regard to trading is remarkable on account of the severe restrictions applied to all forms of industry. It was not as if the worker were left to tread his own path. The relations between employer and employed were strictly defined. Hours, wages, clothing, form of engagement, manner of work, all came under legal supervision. And yet this interfering legislation did not create those differences between male and female adult workers, which have been a deplorable feature of modern times, and which faddists of a certain school are doing their best to accentuate.

It may be argued that women have perfect liberty in the present day to enter upon any commercial pursuit; that the law does not hinder them from becoming merchants, shipowners, and traders of all kinds. What the law, however, does not forbid, custom prevents. Among the middle classes it is tacitly agreed that the boys of the family must be started on a commercial career, and systematic efforts are being made towards achieving that end. A boy is apprenticed to some trade, and shown how to work his way up step by step from the bottom rung to the top of the ladder. He can enter a manufactory, a workshop, a retail business. But want of training and want of capital have militated against the industrial progress of women. There are only a few trades open to a girl, not for lack of physical strength, but because custom has decreed that certain occupations shall belong to men. Putting aside such pursuits as are obviously unsuited to girls—for in dealing with female labour it is the fitness of *girls* that has to be considered, since all occupations must be entered upon before adult life—there are many employments in which they are as well, if not better, fitted to engage than men and boys.

Sir John Bennett, writing in 1857, called attention to the fact that women were excellent watchmakers,

and might be profitably employed in England as they were on the Continent.

"Thousands of women are at this moment finding profitable employment at the most delicate portion of watch-work throughout the district around Neuchatel. The subdivision of labour is there wisely made so minute as to adjust itself precisely to the special capabilities of every woman's individual dexterity. The watch is composed of many distinct parts; some require force and decision in the hands of the workman, while many are so exquisitely delicate that for them the fine touch of the female finger is found to be far superior to the more clumsy handling of the man. . . . Now, why should not our English women be employed upon a labour for which their sisters in Switzerland prove themselves so eminently adapted, and thus provide, to a large extent, a remedy for the distresses of our labouring population, and open out a new channel whereby they may elevate their condition and benefit mankind? In London 50,000 females are working under sixpence per day, and above 100,000 under one shilling per day. So long as nearly every remunerative employment is engrossed by men only, so long must the wretchedness and slavery of women remain what it is. For any man to declare, whatever his motive, that the women of London are sure to do badly what the Swiss women are now doing well, is an insult and a fallacy in which I refuse to join.

"No factory system is necessary for the successful manufacture of this very beautiful little machine. The father has but to teach his own daughters, wife, and female relatives at his own home, and then, just as their leisure suits, they can perform each her part without necessarily

interfering with the most indispensable of her domestic duties. Thus the whole family is well provided for, and by the reduction of the cost of the watch, the sale would be increased indefinitely, and this increase would give additional employment to men and women in about equal proportion. Working watchmakers have no need to fear the introduction of female labour; the large demand that necessarily would ensue, when watches were materially cheapened in price, would doubtless more than compensate any loss they might temporarily sustain; the change it would effect would be found not only a moral good and an immense social blessing, but would satisfy the indispensable requirements of a strong commercial necessity."

When people complain of women pushing into men's occupations, it ought to be remembered how many things men have absorbed which formerly belonged as much, if not more, to women. For instance, it was the women who did the brewing, even in households where men were employed for other domestic duties. The feminine suffix in the word "brewster" is another sign that brewing was a woman's occupation. Most of the beer-houses in London were owned by women who brewed their own beer up to the end of the fifteenth century, by which time brewing was passing into the hands of men. Women were also the principal ale-keepers, and the ale-wife was a noted character in rural England. The number of inns kept at the

present day by women, in the country districts especially, shows how this old custom has held its ground.

An ordinance of Edward III. indicates the kind of trades in which formerly women were predominant. It runs—

"But the intent of the King and his Council is that women, that is to say, brewers, bakers, carders and spinners, and workers as well of wool as of linen cloth and of silk; brawdesters, and breakers of wool, and all other that do use and work all handy works, may freely use and work as they have done before this time without any impeachment or being restrained by this ordinance."

In former times it was not felt to be unseemly for men and women to work side by side, nor are there any evidences that such a proceeding led to immoral conduct. Then it was habitual for the sexes to be associated in labour. The situation presented nothing strange, and nothing tempting; custom proved a safeguard. In spite of the improvement in manners and public conduct, the difficulty of men and women consorting for a common purpose has always been put forth in modern times as a reason why certain occupations should be restricted to men, except among the lower class of operatives who are continually under the eye of overseers, and in shops where the public act as supervisors.

There are certain departments of industry which bring out very clearly the advantages which women formerly possessed and the privileges they enjoyed. It is claimed, though on insufficient grounds, that the present trade unions are the legitimate descendants of the ancient gilds. In one respect, certainly, they are extremely unlike. The trade unions have, until quite recently, been purely men's associations, and their formation has been a hindrance to the women working in the same trade. The gilds knew no distinctions of sex. They were formed in the interest of the trading community for purposes of mutual help, and were as much for the benefit of the "sisteren" as the "bretheren." The attitude of the ancient gilds towards women was essentially different from that of the modern trade unions.

In the Middle Ages the influence of the gilds was considerable. Their authority was widespread, and they practically controlled the trade. It is, therefore, of importance to note their action and the rules by which they were constituted when considering the position of women in regard to industry and commerce. In nearly all the gilds there were women members, and in many cases the names of women appear as founders. Gilds were formed for various purposes. They were in the nature of

friendly societies. In addition to their commercial side, they were "associations for mutual help and social and religious intercourse amongst the people," and these associations "were almost always formed equally of men and women." *

Miss Toulmin Smith says, in her Introduction to "English Gilds," that—

"scarcely five out of the five hundred were not formed equally of men and women. . . . Even where the affairs were managed by a company of priests, women were admitted as lay members, and they had many of the same duties and claims upon the gilds as the men."

The brothers and sisters all met together to transact the business of the gild. It was no mere matter of form to admit women. They were active working members, sharing in all the privileges and contributing to the funds, though smaller payments were sometimes exacted of the women. The female members, like the male, wore the livery.

"Also it is ordeyned that every suster of the fraternite and Gilde schul ben cladde in a swte of hodes, that is for to seye reed, pena 20^{d}." †

Not only did the gild lend money to the younger members to start them in business, and succour

* Helen Blackburn, "The Legal Status of Women" (*Englishwoman's Review*, 1883).

† Gild of St. George, Norwich, founded 1385.

those in distress who "fell into poverty through mishap, and not by fault of their own," but it provided the dowerless with marriage portions, or the penniless with means to embrace a religious life. In the ordinances of the Ludlow Gild, established in 1824, was a clause that—

"if any good girl of the gild of marriageable age cannot have the means found by her father either to go into a religious house or to marry, whichever she wishes to do; friendly and right help shall be given her, out of our means and our common chest, enabling her to do whichever of the two she wishes."

In the religious gilds, of which there were two classes, one for the clergy and one for the laity, the women were put on a par with the lay members. Any gross offence, such as drinking and rioting, committed by a priest, was punished with degradation; but if the offender were a layman or a woman, by exclusion until satisfaction was given. The clergy gilds did not admit women as members, but in one of the foreign gilds the wives of lay brothers were admitted on certain conditions at the oft-repeated request of the members.

The great companies also admitted women. The female members of the Drapers' Company carried on business and received apprentices like the male members. "Every brother or sister of the fellowship

taking an apprentice shall present him to the wardens, and shall pay 13/4," runs the ordinance of 1503. This company was very careful to enjoin respect for its female members. It was expressly ordered that when a "sister" died she should be interred with full honours, have the best pall thrown over her coffin, and be "followed by the Fraternity to the grave with every respectful ceremony equally as the men." After the death of a gild brother, his widow could carry on his trade as one of the gild. If a female member married a man of the same trade who was not free of the gild, he acquired freedom by the marriage. A woman who married a man of another trade was excluded from the gild. There were certain gilds of which women became free in their own right, and others where the wives and daughters of the gild brothers acquired a right to membership from their connection. In the craft gilds a member was allowed to have his wife and children and maid-servant to assist him in his work. The Clothworkers, the Fishmongers, the Grocers, all speak in their articles of brothers and sisters. Wives of members of the Grocers' Company were admitted on their marriage.

"All women not of the Fraternity and after married to any of the Fraternity shall be entered and looked upon as of the Fraternity for ever, and shall be assisted and made

as one of us; and after the death of the husband, the widow shall come to the dinner and pay 40^{d}. if she is able."

If she married out of the fraternity, she was not to be admitted to the feast, or to receive any assistance from the company. Within recent times women have obtained the freedom of both the Fishmongers' and the Drapers' Companies, but for the purpose of sharing in the charities, not with a view to trading. Since the beginning of the present century forty-two women have been admitted to the Drapers' Company, and there are now upwards of a hundred belonging to the Fishmongers' Company.*

Formerly married women were merchants and traders on their own account. Clearly, it was by no means unusual, for in the *Liber Albus of London*, compiled in the fourteenth century, is an ordinance relating to married women carrying on business alone—

"and where a woman *coverte de baron* follows craft within the said city by herself apart, with which the husband in no way intermeddles, such woman shall be bound as a single woman as to all that concerns her said craft. And if the husband and wife are impleaded in such case, the wife shall plead as a single woman in the Court of Record, and shall have her law and other advantages by way of

* Herbert's "Livery Companies."

plea just as a single woman. And if she is condemned she shall be committed to prison until she shall have made satisfaction; and neither the husband nor his goods shall in such case be charged or interfered with."

It was recognized that wives were independent beings responsible for their own acts. This is clearly shown by the following ordinance in the *Liber Albus*:—

"Item, if a wife, though a single woman, rents any house or shop within the said city, she shall be bound to pay the rent of the said house or shop, and shall be impleaded and sued as a single woman, by way of debt if necessary, notwithstanding that she was *coverte de baron* at the time of such letting, supposing that the lessor did not know thereof."

There was no exemption for women on the ground of sex. An enactment in the Statute of Labourers passed in the reign of Edward III. for preventing idleness expressly includes women. It provides that—

"every man and woman of our realm of England of what condition he be, free or bond, able in body and within the age of threescore years, not living in merchandize, not exercising any craft, nor having of his own whereof he may live, nor proper land about whose tillage he may himself occupy, and not serving any other, if he in convenient service (his estate considered) be required to serve, he shall be bounden to serve him which so shall him require. . . . And if any such man or woman being so

required to serve will not the same do, . . . he shall be committed to the next gaol, there to remain under strait keeping, till he find surety to serve in the form aforesaid."

When an oppressive enactment was made regulating the wages of labourers and prohibiting them from receiving anything beyond a certain sum, women were included. Their movements also were controlled. In the reign of Richard II. it was provided—

"that no artificer, labourer, servant nor victualler, man nor woman, should travel out of the hundred, rape, or wapentake where he is dwelling without a letter patent under the King's seal, stating why he is wandering, and that the term for which he or she had been hired has been completed. Otherwise the offender might be put in a pair of stocks, which was to be provided in every town."

Another curiously arbitrary regulation ordained that if a girl or boy served up to the age of twelve at husbandry, they were to continue that employment all their lives, and not to turn to any craft. "Up to the age of twelve" is a significant sign of the conditions of juvenile life. Children were held as full members of the working population.

It is evident that in the eye of the law women ranked on an equality with men. Narrow as was the view taken by legislators of industrial life, and absurd as many of the enactments seem now, it was

reserved for modern times to set up an artificial barrier between the sexes, to push the working woman down a step, and rank her with children and "young persons."

The sense of the community was in advance of the legal conception which merged the personality of the wife in that of the husband. The gilds took care, by special ordinances, to remedy the defects of the law. Having admitted women to the full privileges of their order, and regarding them as workers with individual rights and duties, they naturally reasoned that women should not be exempted from the responsibilities of their own acts because they were married. In the ordinances of the Worcester Gild, founded 1467, is the following:—

"Also yf eny man's wyf becom detto^{r} or plegge, or by or sylle eny chaffare or vitelle, or hyn eny house by har lyf, she to answere to hym or hur that hath cause to sue, as a woman soole marchaunt; and that an acion of dette be mayntend agenst hur, to be conceyved aft^{r} the custom of the seid lite, w^{t}out nemyng her husband in the seid accyon." *

It has been pointed out that under the gild system women were employed to a much smaller extent in manufactures than under the domestic

* "English Gilds": Worcester Ordinances, 1467.

system which followed.* An ordinance of the fullers of Lincoln places a restriction on the indiscriminate employment of women, and limits it to the wives and servants of the masters. Whatever their position in the lower branches of trade, they had full access to the higher departments. They had governing power and the privileges which belong to members of corporate bodies. The changes that followed on the break-up of the gilds tended to throw women into the rank and file of workers and to exclude them from the more responsible posts.

The principle of equality is everywhere apparent in the ordinances relating to labour. In the reign of Edward IV. an ordinance was made in the borough of Wells, that apprentices of both sexes to burgesses would become burgesses themselves when their term of service was accomplished. No distinction was made between male and female. Statutes relating to apprentices in London and elsewhere apply equally to both girls and boys. It was taken as a matter of course that a parent might wish to apprentice his daughter just as much as his son. The proclamation in 1271, relating to the woollen industry, expressly permitted "all workers of woollen cloths, male and female, as well

* Ashley, "Essay on Woollen Industry."

of Flanders as of other lands," to come to England to follow their craft. Sometimes, indeed, the women appear to have enjoyed an advantage, as in the statute of 1363 which ordered that "handicraftsmen should use but one mystery," while workwomen were free to work in their accustomed way. In later times a theory grew up that women were competitors, not co-workers, with men. There are numbers of people who on this ground would hinder women from engaging in commercial pursuits and earning their own livelihood. They argue that it is better for women to be dependent upon their male relatives than to make their own way in the world. That women should seek to achieve economic independence was, until recently, quite against the general sentiment. But the force of circumstances has proved stronger than theories; a surplus female population and changes in social life have upset the notion that women were created solely for family life, and that they were to be the spenders, not the providers.

CHAPTER V.

THE MEDIÆVAL NUN.

Dominance of the Church in the Middle Ages—The Conventual System—Occupations of the Nuns—Power of the Abbesses—Disputes between Religious Houses and the Laity—Latitude allowed to Nuns—Convents Educational Centres—Effects of the Suppression of Convents—Complaints of the Laity.

THROUGHOUT the Middle Ages the Church was the dominant power in England. It may seem absurd to characterize a period extending over several centuries by any one feature, but the supremacy of the Church is so marked as to stamp the whole of that changeful time. The relationship of the Church to the laity was that of guardian and ruler, in temporal as well as spiritual matters. Where the Church did not inspire reverence it inspired fear, and where there was not willing obedience there was dependence.

The position of women with regard to the Church was affected by this attitude of the Church to the world. As servants of this mighty organization,

women who embraced a religious life were lifted by the Church's power and influence above the heads of the rest of the community, of whom they were frequently the teachers, helpers, advisers, and general benefactors in time of need. It was in the nunneries that the education of girls of all classes was carried on. Convent schools were the only schools either for rich or poor, and the "sisters" the only women able to qualify themselves to become instructors.

The nuns, again, were the chief dispensers of charity. The lady of the manor might be a bountiful almsgiver, but she could not be so well acquainted with the needs of the poor as the convent sisters who tended them in sickness and knew all the troubles of their daily life. The convent was a centre of help and enlightenment. Even where the nuns never left their walls, they were constantly employed on benevolent works. Philanthropy, in the Middle Ages, was a religious duty, but it was only in connection with the Church that it was practised in an organized way. The dole-giving at great houses was scarcely philanthropy; it was part of the household system, and the recipients of the bounty regarded it almost as a right.

Women's position in relation to the Church

assumes a different aspect when the limitations of ordinary life are considered. There was no social work in which women could engage carried on independently of the Church. The "religious" had the field to themselves. The lay worker was of no importance whatever unless she had wealth which enabled her to confer benefits, or dignities which gave her prominence. Through the convent the Church's influence was diffused among the people, its doctrines leavened the minds of the masses, its authority and power were felt everywhere among high and low.

Their relation to the Church elevated women to a plane above the common level. For although they were in subjection to their spiritual rulers, those rulers had authority far greater in civil matters than their successors can boast of in the present day. The humble nun who went about with downcast eyes, who was taught to obey without questioning, was the instrument of a power greater than that of kings. In the progress of civilization, it was women who, through the Church, gained the firstfruits of culture.

In the Middle Ages, and, indeed, as long as the conventual system lasted as part of the English Church, the nun was teacher, philanthropist, doctor, and nurse. Her duties were by no means confined

to the cloister. At Gloucester, where there was a Benedictine convent, the nuns went about among the people, teaching, advising, consoling, and discoursing on subjects with which convent sisters are supposed to have little acquaintance. Nuns were sometimes accused of giving too much attention to housewifery. Among other things, they are said to have composed moral tales like those of Hannah More and her sisters, and to have read them to the village maidens.

"The English nuns," writes Paul Casenigo, a Venetian traveller of the sixteenth century, "gave instruction to the poorer virgins (peasants) as to their duties when they became wives; to be obedient to their husbands, and to give good example."

The poorer folk felt it a great loss when the kindly sisters—many of them gentlewomen of good birth—to whom they were accustomed to carry all their troubles, were ruthlessly dispersed at the time of the dissolution of the religious houses. The nunnery of Godstow, near Oxford, famous for its unblemished reputation, was quite a centre of benevolence. There were no clothing clubs in that or any other neighbourhood, no "mothers' meetings," no sewing-parties for making garments for the poor, no penny dinners, no dispensaries, no hospitals. If it had not been for the good nuns of

Godstow, the poor must have suffered greatly. Henri Ambère, a French architect, says of Godstow, that he saw no such excellent nuns in his own country as were to be seen in that convent. Warm clothing was made for the poor, who, in winter, had to bar out the light to keep out the cold by means of shutters, and whose chimney consisted of a simple hole in the roof through which the rain and wind poured down, while the smoke struggled up ineffectually. Were there any sick? it was the nuns to whom application was made for remedies, which were compounded within the convent walls. Were there any infirm and starving? there was food for them at the convent. Was there a wedding in the village? it was the nuns who provided the bride with her simple trousseau. Every year provision was made to give a couple of suits of clothing and the sum of ten shillings to six peasant girls on their marriage.*

Thus we find the nuns carrying on, as part of their service to the Church, all kinds of secular work, now largely performed by lay members of the community.

With the fall of the monastic houses much of this work was dropped. The Anglican Church, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had

* S. H. Burke, "Monastic Houses of England."

no such hold on the people at large as the Romish Church had acquired. As an organization for dealing with the masses, it was particularly ineffective. In this century the Church has regained something of what it lost, or rather it has covered ground which it had never before really occupied. One of the most striking features of its remarkable activity at the present day is the large part taken by women. Without the service of women, the Church would be unable to carry on the greater portion of its secular work. But there is a noticeable difference between the way in which the work is undertaken in the present age and in what are called the Ages of Faith. That which is now accomplished by co-operation among individuals, without reference to any authority, was formerly only practicable under the ægis of the Church. Women could never have performed that kind of ministry to the community without the help of the Church. It was in the convent they obtained the qualification and the means, and it was the convent garb that protected them in the discharge of their outside duties.

There is another aspect in which women's relation to the Church may be studied. The heads of the great religious houses were necessarily persons of importance, with privileges and great

responsibilities. They had considerable wealth at their disposal, and in authority and influence they ranked among the nobles of the land, to whom they were often allied by birth. An abbess was a person to be reckoned with and consulted as much as an abbot. In the age of double monasteries she was superior in power. The origin of these institutions is a little obscure. It has been thought that the idea was derived from Gaul, whither the Saxon princesses were sent to be educated. Dr. Lingard has another theory. He considers the double monasteries were formed to prevent the nuns from having any excuse for intercourse with laymen. A convent could not be worked entirely by women; prejudice and tradition, as well as the limitations of sex, stood in the way.

"The functions of the sacred ministry had always been the exclusive privilege of the men, and they alone were able to support the fatigues of husbandry and conduct the extensive estates which many convents had received from the piety of their benefactors."

Men were necessary evils; the question was how to make their presence innocuous.

"It was conceived that the difficulty might be diminished if it could not be removed, and with this view some monastic legislators devised the plan of establishing double monasteries. In the vicinity of the edifice destined to

receive the virgins who had dedicated their chastity to God, was erected a building for the residence of a society of monks or canons, whose duty it was to officiate at the altar and superintend the external ceremony of the community. The mortified and religious life to which they had bound themselves by the most solemn engagements was supposed to render them superior to temptation; and, to remove even the suspicion of evil, they were strictly forbidden to enter the inclosure of the women, except on particular occasions, with the permission of the superior, and in the presence of witnesses. But the abbess retained the supreme controul over the monks as well as the nuns; their prior depended on her choice, and was bound to regulate his conduct by her instructions."

Double monasteries were very common in Ireland, and were in vogue in England during the first eight or nine centuries of the Christian era. Over these institutions it was always a woman who had supreme rule. No abbot could be persuaded to take charge of a community of nuns, so the abbess ruled over both monks and nuns.

"The whole together formed a sort of vast family, maternity being the natural form of authority—all the more so as the neophytes were often admitted with all their dependents, as was Cædmon, who entered Whitby with all belonging to him, including a child of three years old." *

Abbesses were great people in Saxon times—

* Montalembert.

princesses of royal blood, like St. Hilda, who was grand-niece to Edwin, the first Christian king of Northumbria. St. Ethelburga, who also lived in the seventh century, and became abbess of Brie, in the diocese of Meaux, was the daughter of a king of East Anglia; St. Ethelreda, who built Ely monastery, was a queen, and the daughter of a king; St. Werburga of Ely was the daughter of Wulfere, king of Mercia, and niece of Ethelred, who put her to rule over all the female religious houses. With her royal uncle's aid, she founded Trentham and Hanbury in Staffordshire, and Wedon in Northamptonshire. There were great solemnities when she became a nun and entered the Abbey of Ely, of which St. Audry was then the head. Her qualities and character were celebrated in the following lines:—

> "In beaute amyable she was equall to Rachell,
> Comparable to Sara in fyrme fidelyte,
> In sadnes and wysedom lyke to Abygaell:
> Replete as Delbora with grace of prophecy,
> Equyvalent to Ruth she was in humylyte,
> In pulchrytude Rebecca lyke Hester in Colynesse,
> Lyke Judyth in vertue and proued holynesse."*

For an abbess the cloister rule was relaxed. She might come and go, and see whom she pleased. Her signature is to be found to the charters of

* Henry Bradshaw, "Life of St. Werburga of Chester." E. E. Text Society.

the realm, and she had the right to assist in the deliberations of the national assemblies.

"In 694 abbesses were in so great esteem for their sanctity and prudence, that they were summoned to the Council at Becanceld (in Kent), and the names of five (not one abbot) subscribed to the constitutions there made."

This is the first time they are mentioned as taking part in a synod. The Abbess Elfleda was present at a council held respecting the affairs of Wilfrid, Bishop of Leicester, early in the eighth century. She attended to represent her late brother, King Alcfrid, who died in 705, and who, in the matter of Bishop Wilfrid, had, she asserted, promised, on his death-bed, to stand by the decree of the Apostolic See.

Abbesses were also summoned to attend or to send proxies to the King's Council in later times, as in 1306, when four abbesses

"were cited to the Great Council held to grant an aid on the knighting of the Prince of Wales—an assembly which, although not properly constituted, exercised some of the functions of a parliament." *

The Parliamentary writ bears the names of the abbesses of Wilton, Wynton or Winchester, Shaftesbury, and Barking, then spelt Berkeyngg. Abbesses were required to furnish military service by proxy.

* Stubbs, "Constitutional History."

The Saxon abbesses were invested with immense powers, and owed obedience to none save the Pope. Much of the deference paid them was doubtless on account of their high rank, abbesses being always of good birth, and frequently of royal blood. In later times, as well as in the Saxon era, this was the case. Anne, Duchess of York, mother of Edward IV., was prioress of Sion monastery.

Abbesses seem to have been tenacious of their privileges, and to have known how to resist the encroachments of the clergy when any interference was attempted. It has been said that they claimed the right to ordain. At the same time, they were subject to deposition if they abused their power or were inattentive to their duties. The nuns would carry their complaints to the bishop, who would occasionally take the superintendence of a nunnery into his own hands instead of appointing any abbess—perhaps dividing the immediate governance between two of the nuns. It was the duty of an abbess not only to look after the internal affairs of the convent, but to see that the necessary repairs to the building were carried out.

The powers of an abbess varied according to period and place, for while in some cases they were free to act pretty much as they pleased, in others

they were subject to strict rules, and had their liberty much curtailed.

"By a council near Paris, in the eighth century, it is ordered that the bishop, as well as the abbess, may send a nun misbehaving herself to a penitentiary; that no abbess is to superintend more than one monastery, or to quit the precincts except once a year, when summoned by her sovereign; and that the abbess must do penance in the monastery for her faults by the bishop's direction. Charlemagne enacted that the bishop must report to the Crown any abbess guilty of misconduct, in order that she might be deposed. Abbesses were forbidden, in the reign of his successor, to walk alone, and thus were placed, in some degree, under the surveillance of the sisterhood. Charlemagne prohibited abbesses from laying hands on any one, or pronouncing the blessing." *

On account of the property and lands belonging to convents, abbesses and prioresses were constantly brought into relationship with the outer world, and not always in a very pleasant way. The command which they had over the fiefs of the convent was a frequent source of friction with the laity. In 1292 the Prioress of Mynchin Buckland, in Somersetshire, was a party in a suit, together with a widow and two men, touching the right of common pasture in an appurtenance of the convent. The case went against the religious house, but the

* Gregory Smith, "Christian Monachism."

prioress and the widow both escaped paying their share of the costs on the plea of poverty.*

Sometimes troubles arose from the interference of the clergy. In the fourteenth century a diocesan official made himself very disagreeable to the sisters of Mynchin Buckland priory, demanding to see their title to certain churches which they had held from time immemorial. The sisters replied by demanding, in their turn, to see his commission, whereupon he grew indignant, and imposed upon them a heavy fine for contumacy. The case was carried to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who at once stopped the proceedings of the diocesan official, and restored quietude to the convent.

In the reign of Edward III. we find a prioress suing a sheriff for recovery of a pension granted to her convent in the reign of Henry III. As the sheriff positively refused to pay, the prioress carried the case to the King's Court, where the recalcitrant sheriff was thoroughly beaten. Lands granted to a convent without due formalities sometimes created difficulties, as in the reign of Henry IV., when the Prioress of Mynchin Barrow found her claim to a meadow which had been granted without the royal licence was bringing her into conflict with the laity.

* Hugo, "Mediæval Nunneries."

However, her rights were maintained after full examination.

The head of a religious house, whether abbot or abbess, had a great many secular duties. At Sion Monastery, which was a double house founded by Henry V. in 1415, the abbess who was at the head had the charge of all the money derived from the proceeds of the nuns' work, and also from the endowments of the foundation. In the charter it is set forth—

"that the abbess of the aforesaid place and her successors shall be persons able to prosecute all manner of causes and actions real and personal and mixed, of whatsoever nature or kind they may be, and to answer and defend the same as well in courts spiritual as temporal, before all judges, ecclesiastical and secular whatsoever." *

There was very often a certain amount of Church patronage connected with a religious house. The Prioress of Cannyngton Priory had the living of a church in the diocese of Exeter in her hands, and frequently ecclesiastics were admitted to Holy Orders on titles granted by a prioress and her convent.

Mynchin Buckland, which was a preceptory as well as a priory, was disturbed in 1270 by the conduct of the preceptor, who did not like to see

* Aungier, "History of Syon Monastery."

any money paid for the maintenance of the sisterhood. This was the only community of women established by the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

Nunneries were generally under the superintendence of the local clergy, who were responsible to the bishop, and if there were any disorders, an official was sent down to inquire into the matter. The diocesan officials had large powers, and used them liberally.

Another thing which brought the convent into relationship with the outer world, was the fact of their being used as houses of entertainment, and as places of residence for ladies temporarily in want of a home.* Visitors were constantly sent by the bishop to lodge and board at a priory. These ladies always lived at their own cost, and it was specially enjoined that they were not to interfere with the routine of the establishment. They brought their own servants, and sometimes remained a considerable time. These visitors never came without an express order from the bishop.

The kind of accommodation to be found in a priory may be gathered from the following inventory of the contents of a chamber allotted to one "Dame

* Cf. Chapter II., p. 22, "Learning before the Days of the Printing Press." Period I.

Agnes Browne" in the priory of Minster, in Sheppey.

"Stuff given her by her frends:—A fetherbed, a bolster, 2 pyllows, a payre of blankatts, 2 corse coverleds, 4 pare of shets good and badde, an olde tester and selar of paynted clothes and 2 peces of hangyng to the same; a square cofer carvyd, with 2 bed clothes upon the cofer, and in the wyndow a lytill cobard of waynscott carvyd and 2 lytill chestes; a small goblet with a cover of sylver parcell gylt, a lytill maser with a brynne of sylver and gylt, a lytell pese of sylver and a spore of sylver, 2 lytyll latyn candellstyks, a fire panne and a pare of tonges, 2 small aundyrons, 4 pewter dysshes, a porrenger, a pewter bason, 2 skyllotts [a small pot with a long handle], a lytill brasse pot, a cawdyron and a drynkyng pot of pewter."

There were occasions when the lady abbess dispensed hospitality on a liberal scale. At the convent of Sion, in London, it was the custom at Pardon-time, which was in the month of August, for the Court of Aldermen to pay a visit to the convent.* It will easily be imagined that a good deal of preparation had to be made for these visitors. They recognized the demands made upon their hostess by sending the appropriate acknowledgment of a present of wine.

In the Middle Ages nuns were allowed, under regulations, to go out and see their friends. The

* "London and the Kingdom."

rule was stricter in earlier periods, and strictest of all among the double monasteries. In the first six centuries of the Christian Church, the general rule seems to have been that—

"a virgin was not permitted to leave the house or monastery except for special reason, and no one had access to her but bishop or priest."

But this was subject to variation, for in the Roman Church, about the fourth century, we read of "holy virgins" frequenting the public baths, for which they were blamed by Cyprian. A male or female devotee could, at any time, return to the world and marry.*

The injunctions made in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries show that a great deal of latitude was permitted to nuns. It was not until the sixteenth century that they were rigidly confined to the cloister.† In the Middle Ages they were not much more under restraint, in the matter of visiting, than girls in boarding-schools and colleges at the present day. They were not to go out without express permission, or to wander from house to house when they went into the neighbouring city. Sometimes it was enjoined that they should only go to places from which they could

* Lea, "Sacerdotal Celibacy."

† Hugo, "Mediæval Nunneries."

return the same day, and at other convents they were permitted to remain out one night. In one case they were not to go "beyond the vill except from great and lawful cause; in pairs and in nun's habit."

The Superior of the convent of St. Helen's, London, was admonished to be circumspect, and not to let women have the keys of the postern door, "for there is moche comyng in and oute at unlefull tymys." That there should be any coming and going of this promiscuous kind shows how much latitude was allowed in religious houses.

Anchoresses were under stricter rules, and had less to do with the outer world.

"An anchoress must not become a schoolmistress, nor turn her anchoress-house into a school for children. Her maiden may, however, teach any little girl concerning whom it might be doubted whether she should learn among boys, but an anchoress ought to give her thoughts to God only." *

The directions to the women attending on the anchoresses show how in the thirteenth century, when these rules were framed, personal cleanliness was still regarded as among the errors to be avoided, or at least a luxury to be renounced.

"Let no man see them unveiled, nor without hood. Let them look low. They ought not to kiss, nor lovingly

* "Ancren Riwle."

embrace any man, neither of their acquaintance nor a stranger, *nor to wash their head*, nor to look fixedly on any man, nor to romp nor frolic with him."

But the anchoresses themselves have permission to wash "whensoever it is necessary, as often as ye please." They were enjoined to occupy themselves with useful and charitable work. "Assist with your own labour, as far as ye are able, to clothe yourselves and your domestics as St. Jerome teacheth."

In 1534 the Archbishop of York wrote, among other things, the following injunction to the convent of Synningthwaite :—

"We enjoin and command by these presents that from henceforth the prioress shall diligently provide that no secular nor religious persons have resort or recourse at any time to her or any of the said sisters on any occasion, unless it be their fathers and mothers or other near kinsfolk."

Also—

"We command and exhort the said prioress in virtue of obedience that she from henceforth license none of her sisters to go forth of the house unless it be for the profit of the house, or to visit their fathers and mothers or other their near kinsfolk, if the prioress shall think it convenient, and then the prioress shall assign some sad and discreet religious sister to go with her, and that she limit them a time to return, and that they be not over long out of the monastery."

The nuns were accustomed to indulge in amusements, for there are injunctions which show that games and revels were common.

"Also we enjoyne you that alle daunsyng and revelyng be utterly forborne among you except Christmasse and other honest tymys of recreacyone, among yourse selfe in absence of seculars in all wyse."

The nuns of Appleton, Yorkshire, were apparently rather jovial, and the prioress is commanded in 1489 to see "that none of your sisters use the alehouse nor the watersyde where course of strangers dayly resorte." It was likewise ordered that the sisters should not—

"bring in, receave, or take any layman religious or secular into the chambre or any secrete place day or night, nor with thaim in such private places to commine, ete or drinke, without lycence of your priorisse."

At Sion Monastery the rule was stricter.

"Conversation with seculars was permitted only in company and with the license of the abbess from noon to vespers, and this only on Sundays, and the great feasts of the Saints, not however by going out of the house, but by sitting at the appointed windows; for to none was it permitted after their entrance to leave the cloisters of the monastery. If any sister desired to be seen by her parents or honest and dear friends, she might, with the permission of the abbess, open the window occasionally during the

year; but if she did not open it, a more abundant reward was assured to her hereafter." *

This monastery is described by Wriothesley as "the vertues [most virtuous] house of religion that was in England." Taine speaks of it in very different terms: "Au monastère de Sion les moines confesseurs des nonnes les debauchent et les absolvent tout ensemble." Sion Monastery was of the Order of St. Bridget which was reputed to be one of the best. It was suppressed in 1539.

That there was laxity in the government of some of the convents which resulted in idleness and waste of money is evident. The Bishop of Lincoln, Longland, sent very peremptory orders to the Superior of the nuns of Cottam or Cottram, in Lincolnshire, respecting her duties:

"Ouer this I charge you lady prioresse undre the said payne that ye yereby make your accompte openly and truely in your chaptour house afore the mooste part, and the senours of your susters that they may knowe frome yere to yere the state of said house, and that ye streight upon sight hereof dymynishe the nombre of your seruants as well men as women, whiche excessyve nombre that ye kepe of them bothe is oon of the grette causes of your miserable povertye."

This was in the second quarter of the sixteenth century.

* Aungier, "History of Syon Monastery."

As places of education the convents exercised the most important influence on the outside world. Even in the ninth century children were sent to England from the continent to be educated in the schools established by Theodorus and Hadrian.* This is the more remarkable, as in the seventh century there were so few convents in England that many of the nobility sent their daughters to be educated in France. The religious house of Brie, of which mention has already been made, as having a Saxon abbess, received the daughter of Earconberth, King of Kent, during the rule of the Abbess Fara in 640. Eight hundred years later Sir Thomas Boleyn sent his ill-fated daughter Anne, during her sojourn in France, to a convent at Brie to complete her education. It seems probable that it was the same religious house.

In the seventh and eighth centuries, the nuns were as much occupied with literary studies as the monks, reading theology and even classics, copying manuscripts, which they adorned with wonderful embellishments. They were able to correspond in Latin; some were acquainted with Greek, and they appear to have been very assiduous in the pursuit of such literature as was available.

The Abbess Eadburga and her pupil Leobgitha

* S. H. Burke, "Men and Women of the Reformation."

were both correspondents of the famous Archbishop Boniface, who lived in the eighth century. On one occasion Leobgitha sends Boniface some Latin hexameters of her own composition. In her letter she says—

"These underwritten verses I have endeavoured to compose according to the rules derived from the poets, not in a spirit of presumption, but with the desire of exciting the powers of my slender talents, and in the hope of thine assistance therein. This art I have learnt from Eadburga, who is ever occupied in studying the divine law."

The lines run thus—

"Arbiter omnipotens solusqui cuncta creavit,
In regno patris semperqui lumine fulget;
Qua jugiter flagrans sit regnet gloria Christi,
Illæsum servet semper te jure perenni." *

Another nun, St. Erkenwald, had as a teacher Hildelitha—

"a woman as well excellentlie learned in the liberall sciences as verie expert in skill of religious discipline and life."

For many centuries, indeed as long as the conventual system lasted, the only schools for girls were the convent schools, where, says Robert Aske, "the daughters of gentlemen were brought up with virtue." From the educational point of view, the

* Wright, "Essay on Literature and Learning."

suppression of the convents was decidedly a blunder; and they were not merely schools for book-learning. Among other things were taught the treatment of various disorders, the compounding of simples, the binding up of wounds. The custom of bleeding people for every form of illness, and to ward off possible sickness, created the necessity for some kind of bandage ready prepared to apply to the place where the incision was made. It was common to make these bandages of silk, and offer them as presents.*

The pupils were also taught what might be called fancy cookery, such as the making of sweetmeats. Writing, drawing, needlework of all kinds, and music, both vocal and instrumental, entered into the curriculum.

"In the convents the female portion of the population found their only teachers, the rich as well as the poor, and the destruction of the religious houses by Henry was the absolute extinction of any systematic education for women during a long period. Thus at Winchester Convent, the list of the ladies being educated within the walls at the time of the suppression shows that these Benedictine nuns were training the children of the first families in the country. Carrow, in Norfolk, for centuries gave instruction to the daughters of the neighbouring gentry, and as early as A.D. 1273 a papal prohibition was obtained from

* Cf. G. Hill, "History of English Dress," vol. i.

Pope Gregory X., restraining the nobility from crowding this monastery with more sisters than its income would support." *

Of Mynchin Buckland we read—

"It was, doubtless, also a noted seminary for the daughters of the great neighbouring families. The Berkeleys, Erleghs, Montacutes, Wrothams, Bouchers, and others, were ever at home at Buckland, and learned from the good sisters all the mental accomplishments which they in after-life possessed. Reading, writing, some knowledge of arithmetic, the art of embroidery, music, and French, 'after the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,' were the recognized course of study, while the preparation of perfumes, balsams, simples, and confectionery was among the more ordinary departments of the education afforded."

When the suppression took place, the laity, who enjoyed great benefits from the presence of the religious houses, made ineffectual protests against their dissolution. The famous convent of Godstow, in Oxfordshire, was particularly regretted, as it was one—

"where there was great strictness of life, and to which were most of the young gentlewomen of the county sent to be bred, so that the gentry of the county desired the king would spare the house."

The abbess herself wrote a long letter to Thomas Cromwell, complaining of the treatment to which

* Gasquet, "Suppression of the Monasteries."

she was subjected. Some portions of it may be read with interest:—

"Pleaseth hit your Honour with my moste humble dowtye, to be advertised, that where it hath pleasyd your Lordship to be the verie meane to the King's Majestie for my preferment, most unworthie to be Abbes of this the King's Monasterie of Godystowe. . . . I trust to God that I have never offendyd God's laws, neither the King's, wherebie this poore monasterie ought to be suppressed. And this notwithstanding, my good Lorde, so it is, that Dr. London, whiche (as your Lordship doth well know) was agaynst my promotion, and hath ever sence borne me great malys and grudge, like my mortal enemye, is sodenlie cummynd unto me, with a great rowte with him, and here doth threaten me and my Sisters, saying that he hath the King's commission to suppress this House spyte of my teeth. And when he saw that I was contente that he sholde do all things according to his Commission, and shewyd him playne that I wolde never surrender to his hande, being my awncyent enemye; now he begins to entreat me, and to invegle my Sisters, one by one, otherwise than ever I herde tell that the King's subjects hathe been handelyd, and here tarieth and contynueth to my great coste and charges, and will not take my answere that I will not surrender till I know the King's gracious commandment, or your good Lordship's. . . .

"And notwithstanding that Dr. London, like an untrew man, hath informed your Lordship that I am a spoiler and a waster, your good Lordship shall know that the contrary is trewe; for I have *not alienatyd one halporthe* of goods of this monasterie, movable or unmovable, but

have rather increas'd the same, nor never made lease of any farme or peece of grounde belongyng to this House, or then hath been in times paste, alwaies set under Convent Seal for the wealthe of the House. And therefore my very truste is, that I shall find the Kynge as gracious Lord unto me, as he is to *all other* his subjects, seyng I have not offendyd."

The letter is dated from Godstow, or, as it was spelt then, Godistow, and signed—

"Your most bounden Beds Woman,
"Katherine Bulkeley, *Abbes there.*"

From other convents came pathetic appeals from the helpless inmates, who were threatened with loss of home and livelihood. One abbess wrote to Cromwell—

"But now as touchynge my nowne parte, I most humbly beseche yow to be so specyall good mayster unto me yowre poore bedewoman as to give me yowre best advertysment and counseyle what waye shal be best for me to take, seynge there shal be none left here but myselfe and thys poore madyn. . . . Trustynge and nothynge dowtynge in youre goodnes, that ye wyll so provyd for us, that we shall have syche onest lyvynge that we shall not be drevyn be necessyte nether to begge nor to fall to other unconvenyance."

The Prioress and nuns of Legborne wrote, saying—

"And whereas we doo here that a grete nombre of abbyes shal be punnyshid, subprest, and put downe,

bicause of theire myslyvyng, and that all abbyes and pryoryes under the value of £200 be at oure moste noble prynces pleasure to sub-presse and put downe, yet if it may pleas youre goodnes we trust in God ye shall here no compleyntes agaynst us nother in oure lyvyng nor hospitalitie keepyng. In consideracion whereof if it may please youre goodnes in oure great necessitie to be a meane and sewter for youre owne powre pryory, that it may be preserved and stand, you shal be a more higher ffounder to us then he that first foundid oure howse."

When the conventual system came to an end, the relation of women to the Church was materially changed. They were no longer the Church's administrators and her authorized servants. And while they could not, as before, dispense its alms and hospitality, or impart the knowledge they had acquired in the cloister, they themselves were deprived of its protecting care. At the time of the dissolution of the monasteries the "religious" women did not exceed 1560,* but to a large number of others the cloister was a temporary retreat, a possible home, a refuge in time of distress. The effect upon women of the sweeping away of monastic institutions may be considered from various points of view—from the educational, social, as well as the religious side. It may be regarded as the work of a reformer or of a

* Gasquet.

destroyer. Mr. Lecky describes it as "far from a benefit to women or the world." * But that it greatly affected the position of women there can be no question. It loosened, although it did not sever, the close tie which had bound women to the spiritual authority as to a foster-mother. The Anglican Church stood in a different relation, socially speaking, to the people. It was a less personal relation. And the Protestant clergy did not make use of women in any special way as the instruments of the Church. As will be seen later on, the tendency during the first two centuries of the religious revolution, as it may be termed, was to ignore women as workers. The Roman Church, while it plainly proclaimed women to be inferior morally, and by inference intellectually, to men, availed itself to the full of their capacities. Until modern times, the Protestant Church went on its way regardless of the fact that a great unused power was lying close at hand. It was in movements outside the Church that the religious emotion in women first found vent in the Protestant era.

* "European Morals," vol. ii.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHURCH AS A SOCIAL FACTOR.

Influence of the Church on women in social life—The twofold conception of womanhood—Canon and Civil Law—Effect of ecclesiastical celibacy.

It has come to be regarded almost as truism that women are more religious than men, that they are, by nature, more devout, more susceptible to spiritual influences. If Matthew Arnold's definition of religion as "morality touched by emotion" be accepted, it is easy to point to the larger development of the emotional nature in women as a cause for their greater leaning towards religion. But for the present purpose it is only necessary to deal with the manifestations of this impulse; the causes belong to the domain of psychology.

Before considering women's part in the religious life of the country, it has to be remembered that their part in social life has been largely determined by the Church. For centuries the Church was,

practically, the only civilizing influence, the only restraint upon passion and lawlessness, the only protection of the weak against the strong. It was the Church that taught respect for womanhood, that raised the wife from a state of subjection amounting to slavery to a position of dignity in the household. It was in the Church that women sought safety, shelter, protection, livelihood, occupation, when the home was gone, when kindred failed, when life and honour were at stake. The supremacy which the Church exercised over the laity in general was emphasized in the case of women, more prone to render unquestioning obedience to constituted authority.

From the beginning the Church was quick to recognize the value of women's adherence, and the importance of the services which they could render. By raising women, the Church created a power for its own uses. And women were as quick to respond. They gave themselves freely. Whatever the Church has done for women has been repaid by them tenfold. Their labour, their property, their lives were placed at the disposal of the Church. They gave something more—their freedom of thought, their independence of action. Their minds, as well as their consciences, were in the keeping of the priest.

The Church, while with one hand it raised woman from the abasement into which she had been cast by Paganism, lowered her with the other. When it taught men to pay respect to their wives, when it interfered with the tyranny which placed women in complete subjection to their male relatives, it was that women might come directly under the priestly power. The Church had no intention of setting women free to act independently. It was only a change of masters. This was seen especially about the fourth century, when the clergy had begun to degenerate from their former simplicity.

"Then the men, exiling the women by degrees, took the sole government of the church into their own hands, and assembling together, made what canons they pleased for their own secular advantage. Then were some published against the ordination of priestesses, deaconesses, etc." *

The same thing is observable in the next century.

"Women in most places were denied all ecclesiastical offices, and commanded to be silent in the churches, and so it continued for several centuries even till the ancient faith began to bud forth again (after that great night of apostacy) among the Waldenses, who justified women's preaching."

The Church was careful to impress women with a sense of their inferiority. It has even been

* Dr. Philip, "Vindiciæ Veritatis."

denied that Christianity—or rather its exponents—did anything to elevate women to a higher social status.

"Das Christenthum brachte der Frau keine Erlösung aus ihrer Erniedrigung. Im Gegentheil! War sie in der heidnischen Welt nur die Sklavin, die Waare, das Hausthier gewesen, so wurde sie jetzt noch ausserdem zum 'Gefäss der Hölle' erklärt." *

This remark is borne out by Tertullian's apostrophe—

"Woman! thou oughtest always to walk in mourning and rags, thine eyes filled with tears of repentance, to make men forget that thou hast been the destruction of the race. Woman, thou art the gate of hell."

A curious contradiction appears in theological teaching. It is difficult to reconcile the conception of womanhood which found its expression in Mariolatry with that which was given voice to by the Fathers, which proclaimed woman unfit to receive the Eucharist in her naked hands, which forbade her to approach the altar,† which taught that she was a temptation in man's way to try him, which regarded the married state as a condition of sin, and even among the laity exalted virginity and celibacy as a species of sainthood. In a treatise

* Arnold von der Passer, "Eva."

† "De Ritu Mulierum in Ecclesia."

on chastity attributed to Sixtus III., married people are said to risk, though not entirely to forfeit, eternal happiness. St. Martin of Tours considered marriage pardonable, but virginity glorious. St. Jerome spoke of marriage as at best a vice: "All that we can do is to excuse and purify it." Tertullian was much stronger: "Celibacy," he wrote, "must be chosen, though the human race perish in consequence."

The higher conception of womanhood was an ideal only, a theme for poets, a dream of saints; the lower conception was the guide for common life, the basis of everyday teaching. It was this lower conception which, in different ways, determined women's position in society. Gradually the precepts of the canon law found their way into common law, and the subordination enforced upon women in matters spiritual was extended to matters temporal. The supremacy which canon law obtained is easily accounted for when we compare the disciplined character of all ecclesiastical as compared with lay government, the training of the priest with that of the noble, the ignorance pervading all classes, and the rude character of the legislation administered in feudal society.

The Roman conquest brought the legislative code of the empire into Britain, but with the advent

of Christianity Roman law was gradually coloured by ecclesiastical law, and assumed a different complexion. Some writers go so far as to say that Roman law was entirely superseded. Through the law the Church kept an invisible hold upon the people, and compelled subjugation to its decrees. The Church, however, did not need shelter or excuse for any of its acts. It was powerful enough to command obedience to whatever it chose to decree. There was no influence greater, no authority more dreaded. Its rival, education, was but a puny stripling, without armour or weapons.

In the tenth century we find a repetition of the ecclesiastical law excluding women from certain parts of the church. There is a Saxon constitution which runs—

"We charge that at the time when the priest sings mass no woman be nigh the altar, but that they stand in their own place, and that the mass priest there receive of them what they are willing to offer."

Women were not suffered to penetrate within the altar precincts in the sixteenth century. It is related that Sir Thomas More's wife did not sit with her husband in the chancel, but in some other part of the church, in what are described as the common parish seats.

The entrance of women within the Church of

Durham was limited to a certain point in the nave marked by a blue cross on the marble pavement, in accordance with the rule of St. Cuthbert. One day in the year 1333, Queen Philippa, wife of Edward III., paid a visit to Durham Cathedral, supped with the king in the Prior's chamber, and retired to rest in the apartment arranged for her husband in the priory. The monks were scandalized, and sought an interview with the king, who bade the queen rise, which she did immediately, and, clad only in her night array, went over from the priory buildings to the castle for the night, beseeching St. Cuthbert's pardon for having polluted sacred ground with her presence.

Ecclesiastical law affected women very disastrously by the enforcement of priestly celibacy. Although against the rules of the Church, marriage was common among the clergy in pre-Norman times, especially in the north of England. Substantial reasons existed against allowing priests to marry. There were complaints that the married clergy took the Church property to provide marriage portions for their sons and daughters and legacies for their wives, and were generally in the habit of applying ecclesiastical funds to their private uses.

"It is all the worse when they have it all, for they do not dispose of it as they ought, but decorate their wives with

what they should the altars, and turn everything to their own worldly pomp. . . . Let those who before this had the evil custom of decorating their women as they should the altars refrain from this evil custom, and decorate their churches as they best can; then would they command for themselves both divine counsel and worldly worship. A priest's wife is nothing but a snare of the devil, and he who is ensnared thereby on to his end will be seized fast by the devil."

In the tenth century, priests were found deserting their wives for other women. No doubt scandals of this kind, and other grave abuses, induced the Winchester Council in 1076 to make a declaration against the marriage of priests. All future marriages were forbidden, but parish priests who were already married were allowed to keep their wives. In the next century severe measures were taken. A Council was convened at London in 1102, when it was decreed that no married priest could celebrate. The controversy on clerical celibacy went on by fits and starts, until the Lateran Council in 1215 definitely pronounced against marriage. Meanwhile the clergy had followed their own instincts, and evaded the ordinances against marriage by taking concubines, like Bishop Nigel of Ely, in the twelfth century. That prelate's partner was the valiant Maud of Ramsbury, who bravely defended the castle of Devizes against

King Stephen, and only capitulated when the enemy, having stolen her son, threatened to hang him before her eyes.

The document entitled, "Instructions for Parish Priests," composed not later than the middle of the fifteenth century, shows that it was quite common for priests to be married, though the practice was reprobated, and "chastity," meaning abstinence from wedlock, was enjoined. But those who were too weak to live honestly and uprightly as celibates are told to take a wife. Dr. Jessop states that by the eleventh century country parsons had almost ceased to be married men, though Benedicts were found among them here and there as late as the thirteenth century, when a veto was put upon priests' marriages.* The decrees of provincial councils prove the existence of priestly concubinage down to the sixteenth century.

The worst effects of the celibate system were seen in the sixteenth century. Debauchery was spread throughout the country. As many as one hundred thousand women were ruined by the priests, for whom houses of ill fame were kept.† From Carnarvonshire came complaints of the well-to-do laity, that their wives and daughters were not

* *Nineteenth Century*, September, 1894.

† Draper, "Intellectual Development of Europe."

safe from outrage by the priests. Out of their own mouths the clergy are condemned. In 1536 the secular clergy in the diocese of Bangor wrote to Cromwell, that if their women were taken away they would be homeless outcasts.

"We ourselves shall be driven to seek our living at all houses and taverns, for mansions upon the benefices and vicarages we have none. And as for gentlemen and substantial honest men, for fear of inconvenience, and knowing our frailty and accustomed liberty, they will in no wise board us in their houses."

In this year the Lower House of Convocation presented a memorial inveighing against priestly marriages. But in the reign of Edward VI., what might be called a Permissive Bill was passed for the sufficient reason that "great filthiness of living had followed on the laws that compelled chastity and prohibited marriage." Under Queen Mary celibacy was again enforced, married priests were ejected from their livings, and even those who renounced their wives were not always secure of their places. Elizabeth had a great aversion to married priests, and openly expressed her contempt for their wives, whom she could not bring herself to receive at Court. But though she demurred a good deal to giving a formal assent to ecclesiastical marriages, the Act of Edward VI. was

eventually reinforced, a reaction having set in with the rise of the Protestant party. The Act was hedged round with various restrictions.

"No manner of priest or deacon shall hereafter take to his wife any manner of woman without the advice and allowance first had upon good examination by the bishop of the same diocese and two justices of the peace of the same shire dwelling next to the place where the same woman hath made her most abode before her marriage; not without the good-will of the parents of the said woman, if she have any living, or two of the next of her kinsfolks, or for lack of the knowledge of such, of her master or mistress where she serveth."

The advantages and disadvantages of celibacy, and the manner of life proper for the married and the unmarried priest, are set forth by George Herbert in his dissertation on the "Country Parson."

"The country parson, considering that virginity is a higher state than matrimony, and that the ministry requires the best and highest things, is rather unmarried than married. But yet, as the temper of his body may be, or as the temper of his parish may be, where he may have occasion to converse with women, and that among suspicious men, and other like circumstances considered, he is rather married than unmarried. . . . If he be unmarried, he hath not a woman in his house, but finds opportunities of having his meat dressed and other services done by men-servants at home, and his linen washed abroad. If

he be unmarried and sojourn, he never talks with any women alone, but in the audience of others; and that seldom, and then also in a serious manner, never jestingly or sportfully. . . .

"If he be married, the choice of his wife was made rather by his ear than by his eye; his judgment, not his affection, found out a fit wife for him. . . .

"As he is just in all things, so is he to his wife also. . . . Therefore he gives her respect both afore her servants and others, and half at least of the government of the house, reserving so much of the affairs as serve for a diversion for him; yet never giving over the reins, but that he sometimes looks how things go."

The ideal wife is thus described:

"Instead of the qualities of the world, he requires only three of her. First, training up of her children and maids in the fear of God; with prayers and catechising and all religious duties. Secondly, a curing and healing of all wounds and sores with her own hands; which skill either she brought with her, or he takes care she shall learn it of some religious neighbour. Thirdly, a providing for her family in some such sort, as that neither they want a competent sustentation, nor her husband be brought into debt."

In modern times a section of the clergy in the English Church have shown a disposition to revert to the practice of earlier ages, and follow a celibate life. It is part of the ascetic movement which some years ago was rather a marked feature in the Church. But even among those Anglicans who

recoil from the term "Protestant," and endeavour to preserve as much as possible of the forms of Church government which prevailed in pre-Reformation times, there are few comparatively who adopt this species of monasticism.

No doubt marriage has greatly helped to break down the authority of the priest. A man with a wife and family living the domestic life of an ordinary citizen is brought at once to the level of common humanity, priest though he be. He loses that glamour which attached to him when he was cut off from his fellows and set apart on another plane by virtue of his office. Women, more than men, have been in all ages prone to superstitious reverence for ecclesiastical authority. They are still apt to look to the clergyman to guide them in the daily affairs of secular life, not because they consider him better qualified intellectually than other men, but because they have a lurking remnant of belief in priestly infallibility. There are many who make the clergyman a referee on all subjects, of whatever nature, and look upon him as the proper head of every movement, educational, philanthropic, or otherwise, irrespective of his qualifications for such a position. The deference paid to clerical opinion and the leaning on clerical authority are survivals of old habits of thought, weakened in the process

of transmission, but having a strong principle of vitality.

The counterbalancing force to the influence of the Church on women is to be found not merely in its acknowledged rivals, intellectual development and the progress of secular knowledge, but in the motive-power of the religious sentiment. It has been justly observed that—

"the clergy of all ages, in concentrating the strength of woman on her religious nature, have summoned up a power that they could not control. When they had once lost the confidence of those ruled by this mighty religious sentiment, it was turned against them. In the Greek and Roman worship women were the most faithful to the altars of the gods; yet when Christianity arose, the foremost martyrs were women. In the Middle Ages women were the best Catholics, but they were afterwards the best Huguenots. It was a woman, not a man, that threw the stool at the offending minister's head in a Scotch kirk; it was a woman who made the best Quaker martyr on Boston common. And from vixennish Jenny Geddes to high-minded Mary Dyer, the whole range of womanly temperament responds as well to the appeal of religious freedom as of religious slavery." *

A French writer in the middle of the present century, describing England during the Ages of Faith, with its surname of the "Isle of Saints," as "un spectacle digne des anges," laments its

* Higginson, "Common Sense about Women."

coldness and lack of virtue under Protestantism. In what he styles this materialistic age—

"la femme est loin, bien loin d'être ce qu'elle fut pour l'opinion publique aux époques de foi vive et ardente."

The expression of the religious sentiment has taken a different form. It may be less obvious and definite, but in the opinion of one of our modern thinkers it is the mainspring of all progress—

"Nothing can be more obvious," writes Mr. Kidd,* "as soon as we begin to understand the nature of the process of evolution in progress around us, than that the moving force behind it is not the intellect, and that the development as a whole is not in any true sense an intellectual development.

. . . . . .

"The intellect is employed in developing ground which has been won for it by other forces. But it would appear that it has by itself no power to occupy this ground; it has not even any power to continue to hold it after it has been won, when these forces have spent and exhausted themselves. The evolution which is slowly proceeding in human society is not primarily intellectual, but religious in character."

* "Social Evolution."

CHAPTER VII.

ALMSGIVING IN OLDEN TIMES.

Almsgiving at the monasteries—Charity dispensed by private families—Bequests of ladies for the relief of the poor—Action of the Church—Change in the conception of the duty of almsgiving—Needlework for the poor—Modern gilds—Charity at the present day.

IN the days preceding the poor law—that is, before the dissolution of the monasteries—charity to the poor was regarded in much the same light as hospitality among equals. Just as it was an unwritten law that strangers on all occasions must be entertained, so it was an accepted rule of life for the wealthy to support their poor neighbours with doles in money and in kind. The monasteries were the great dispensers of alms; but every nobleman's or gentleman's house had also a number of poor who looked to it for support. The feudal system was in a great measure responsible for this feeling of dependence. Nobody under that system stood alone. The poor were bound to the soil, and

their lives were inextricably woven—not always for their good—into the lives of those above them. With the dispensation of doles and the care of the poor the ladies in the households of the nobility were much concerned. It was the business of the mistress to see that the sick were cared for, the needy visited, and that the aged had their wants supplied. Charity was less far-reaching, and had no pretence at organization; it was a part of domestic life, not an outside business to be taken up and laid down at will. What is now done by means of paid officials was then all accomplished by the donors themselves. The charity which now passes through numerous channels before it reaches the recipient went then by a comparatively direct route.

Great families sometimes marked the Church festivals by special almsgiving, and would celebrate marriage anniversaries in the same way. This was the custom in the family of Lord William Howard at Naworth Castle. The giving away of money at other times seems to have been rather spasmodic. The steward of the Howard family frequently records: "To my Lady to give away 20/-." Besides what was dispensed in that way, there were lists of doles to the poor, such as sixpence to a poor woman; sixpence to a poor leper boy; "To the poor at Armathwate 6*d.*" (which shows how much

more sixpence was worth then); "To the pore at Carlyle 1/6." There was giving at funerals too; the steward records, "Bestowed in bread and beer at the buriall of the plumber 5/-," among the extraordinary payments; where we also find items for shoemending recorded, such as, "Mending a pair of shoes 4*d.*" It was customary for a person who had any property at all to leave a sum of money to be given to the poor on the day of his or her burial. Thus Mrs. Susannah Eyre, a widow of substantial means who lived in the seventeenth century, left twopence a piece for the poor who should attend her funeral, besides a bequest of goods and chattels to be distributed among the poor of specified districts.

Great ladies usually recognized their duties among the poor, not only by giving doles, but by founding almshouses. There were, probably, not many who actually maintained a number of poor within their own walls like Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond. This celebrated lady used to maintain twelve poor people under her roof when she retired to her manor of Woking, where Dr. John Fisher acted as her confessor and almoner.

Nearly every lady of distinction did something of a permanent nature for the relief of the poor. The famous Bess of Hardwick, in the midst of her

building of palaces, did not forget to erect and liberally endow an almshouse for the poor at Derby. The Countess of Pembroke not only built an almshouse, but procured a patent by which it was turned into a corporation. Various are the charities bequeathed by noble ladies in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries for the relief of the poor. Lady Gresham in 1560 left tenements in the city, the rents of which were to be used for the poor, partly in money and partly in coals. Mrs. Frances Clark left £200 to the Skinners' Company to pay £10 a year for the poor of St. Thomas's, Southwark. Dame Isabell Gray, of Ogle Castle, Northumberland, left a sum of money for the poor, to be given at the day of her burial. Instances might be multiplied, such as the bequest of Lady Middleton in 1645, of Viscountess Conway in 1637, of Lady Mico in 1670, of Mrs. Ridley in 1716. Money that is now given to societies was then left to individuals.

The care of the poor from the days of Dorcas downwards has always been deemed women's special work, but it has been largely controlled by the church. In olden times a great lady would choose for her almoner a monk, or at least a priest. The Church has endeavoured to maintain its authority in this respect down to the present

day. A large portion of the ancient endowments and funds for the relief of the poor is in its hands. Great ladies and women in all ranks still frequently allow their charities to be filtered through the medium of the Church. The visiting of the poor is carried on under ecclesiastical guidance. The Church in modern times has striven to become the fountain and head of all benevolence, and, as a great organized institution, discourages outside efforts. Women in country districts dispense most of their charity under the direction of the priest, except where there happens to be a great lady who chooses to assert her independence, and is powerful enough to act alone.

In large towns, the whole social life being so complex, there is more scope for individuality in work. The Church is less dominant, being brought into rivalry with lay organizations. But in secular work there is a tendency for women to run in a groove. The immense gain that accrues from combination in work, the pernicious effects of indiscriminate charity, and the impossibility of dealing with a huge floating population of indigent persons except by well-organized methods, have a tendency to convert hundreds of women workers into mere automata, obeying the behests of some central authority.

The whole conception of almsgiving has changed. In the Middle Ages, and for a considerable period after, it was regarded as a soul-saving process, of much the same value as saying masses or practising mortifications. Sovereigns were frequently expected to honour the festivals of the saints by entertaining immense numbers of indigent persons, and the royal munificence was often severely taxed. That a woman should be bountiful to the poor, according to her means, was a cardinal virtue which ranked with truth and chastity.

The support of the poor has now become a social rather than a personal obligation. It has been converted from a pious duty into a State practice. The religious element, in spite of the influence of the Church, has much diminished. Charity still covers some of our sins, but not the multitude it was wont to envelop. Souls are no longer saved by a distribution of loaves and blankets, or weekly doles to the poor. The element of personal service, which was once thought essential, has also faded into comparative insignificance. Charity may be done by deputy, by a stroke of the pen. It cannot, of course, be supposed that great ladies in former times did not exercise a good deal of benevolence by indirect means; but it may be affirmed that a mediæval

gentlewoman who did not perform some personal office for the relief of the poor, would have been severely censured for her neglect and impiety unless she silenced the priests by exceptionally large gifts. Now a lady may walk through life unrebuked, though she has never with her own hands performed a single act of charity.

In former days noble ladies—that is, those of a pious disposition—occupied themselves largely in making garments for the poor. Queens, princesses, and ladies of rank would toil for hours at a time, and give up a portion of each day, to the conversion of coarse cloth into suitable apparel for their humble neighbours, who counted upon this charity. Each lady, assisted possibly by her maids, provided for the wants of those who were nearest at hand. Needlework, which since the introduction of machinery has fallen to a lower level of repute, was formerly the occupation most highly esteemed among women. It was not only a duty, but a pious exercise. While some salved their consciences with elaborate embroidery for church purposes, others were contented to plod along the homely seam, to fashion smocks and cloaks for the toilers, and bed-linen and blankets for the sick.

In the present century needlework has received

an impetus from the formation of gilds and societies. Nearly all the work for the poor is done in this associated manner. The workers, instead of distributing their productions personally, send them more often to some centre to be dispensed in an organized fashion. It is curious to note how, in spite of the invention of the sewing-machine, the women of the middle classes cling to the old methods. A dozen to twenty ladies will meet together at regular intervals for four or five hours to accomplish what a quarter of their number could do with machines in a tithe of the time. If working parties had no other object than the ostensible one of providing raiment for the poor, or clothing savages, they would not continue to flourish.

In olden times great ladies sat in their tapestried chambers, toiling painfully to convert the coarse cloth spun in their own households into smocks and gowns for dwellers in the windowless, smoke-begrimed hovels of the neighbouring hamlets. The great ladies of the present day, from their cosy boudoirs, issue schemes for the enrolment of women all over the country into gilds and societies for providing clothing for the poor. Instead of working singly, they co-operate. The names of H.R.H. Princess Henry of Battenberg, H.R.H.

the Duchess of Teck, and Lady Wolverton will occur readily as leaders of needlework gilds.

The articles made by these gilds are sent to the clergy for distribution among their poor parishioners, to homes and hospitals, even to prisons. There are many schools for girls of the educated classes where a portion of time is set apart for needlework for the poor, the aim being twofold: to teach the girls how to work, and to cultivate the spirit of service. The old customs are being revived in a different dress. People who are afraid that the ways of our ancestors are quite forgotten and despised in the whirl of new notions, may take comfort from the thought of how much attention is given to the serious study of homely duties. Science has been introduced into the domestic arts. The same things are being done, but in better ways. This is specially true with regard to philanthropy. Almsgiving, which was once regarded as a religious duty, has now become a positive evil. Society as now constituted, far from benefiting, suffers much from any attempt to return to the old forms of benevolence. Weekly doles of bread, and the flinging of coppers to beggars in the street, help to dislocate the social machinery. In the innumerable channels which modern charity has found for itself, the aim is to secure the

independence of the recipients. Formerly, almsgiving had a double object—to benefit the soul of the donor as well as contribute to the welfare of the poor. At the present day, almsgiving, or the more cautious benevolence which has taken its place, is single in purpose, and has for its sole end the well-being of the beneficiary.

PERIOD II.

ENGLAND AFTER THE RENAISSANCE.

CHAPTER I.

FAMILY LIFE AFTER THE FALL OF FEUDALISM.

Effect on Women of the fall of Feudalism—Characteristics of Tudor England—Observations of foreigners on Englishwomen—Greater liberty allowed to women in England than on the Continent—Social habits and amusements—Women's education—English family life—Parents and children.

THE fall of feudalism, which meant the break-up of the power of the nobles, had as great an influence on the position of women in England as the overthrow of the supremacy of the Roman Church. Women in everyday life are more affected by a social than a religious change. The king might refuse to acknowledge the authority of the Pope, monasteries might be stripped of their wealth and the Church of its endowments, but women who were not nuns, or destined for a religious life, did not feel the upheaval which was undermining the power of the priest as they felt the storm which shattered the power of the noble. Whatever the form of Church government might be, women did

not cease to recognize the duty of obedience to spiritual directors. But when the family no longer owed obedience to a feudal lord, when personal service was at an end, when the labourer was free to work for his own profit, the change that was passing over social life was very distinctly felt by families in the humbler ranks. Of the third great force, the mental freedom given by the Renaissance, there are naturally fewer signs, for its influence was confined chiefly to the upper classes.

The dawn of the sixteenth century was the dawn of a new era, social, religious, and commercial. It was the beginning of a gradual transformation which with every century, with every generation, takes some new form, and is sometimes called progress, sometimes revolution, but which moves on with the same relentless persistence as the laws that govern the earth.

It was a rough world in which women found themselves at liberty to come and go, to taste new pleasures, enjoy fresh luxuries, hear new opinions, and think new thoughts. But, at least, it was a world of action, of striving, of pushing forward. Despotic as was the throne, oppressive as were the new landowning class, a freer spirit prevailed. Social changes work gradually, and their influence is not at once perceived; but the germ of modern

England was working in those days of religious stress, intellectual activity, and commercial enterprise.

The visits of foreigners to England in the sixteenth century enable us to see ourselves as others saw us. The position of women and the relations of the sexes always excited comment from strangers.

"Wives," writes a Dutchman, "are not kept so strictly as they are in Spain or elsewhere. Nor are they shut up, but they have the free management of the house or housekeeping, after the fashion of those of the Netherlands and others their neighbours. They go to market to buy what they like best to eat. They are well dressed, fond of taking it easy, and commonly leave the care of household matters and drudgery to their servants. They sit before their doors, decked out in fine clothes, in order to see and be seen by the passers-by. In all banquets and feasts they are shown the greatest honour. They are placed at the upper end of the table, where they are first served; at the lower end they help the men. All the rest of their time they employ in walking and riding, in playing at cards or otherwise, in visiting their friends and keeping company, conversing with their equals (whom they term gossips) and their neighbours, and making merry with them at child-births, christenings, churchings, and funerals; and all this with the permission and knowledge of their husbands, as such is the custom. Although the husbands often recommend to them the pains, industry, and care of the German or Dutch women, who do what

the men ought to do both in the house and the shops, for which services in England men are employed, nevertheless the women usually persist in retaining their customs. This is why England is called the paradise of married women. The girls who are not yet married are kept much more rigorously and strictly than in the Low Countries."

Another observer says—

"The women have much more liberty than perhaps in any other place. . . . The females have great liberty, and are almost like masters."

Manners were very free, nowhere more so than among persons of quality, and language was very coarse to modern ears. But if women did not hesitate to use an oath, if their behaviour to men seems bold and their coquetry of a type too pronounced, it must be remembered that they only adopted the tone of the society in which they lived.

"In all the world," says a sixteenth-century writer, "there is no regyon nor countrie that doth use more swearynge than is used in Englande, for a chylde that scarse can speake, a boy, a gyrle, a wenche, now-a-dayes wyl swere as great othes as an old knave and an olde drabbe. . . . As for swearers a man nede not to seke for theym, for in the Kynges courte and lordes courtes in cities, borowes and in townes, and in every house, in maner there is abbominable swerynge, and no man dothe go about to redresse it, but doth take swearyng as for no synne,

whiche is a damnable synne ; and they the which doth use it, be possessed of the Devill, and no man can helpe them but God and the kyng."

The attitude of men towards women had undoubtedly changed. The old chivalric notions had died away, and with them a good deal of false sentiment. Tudor England did not set woman up on a pinnacle as a being endowed with supernatural virtues and charms. It did not make quests on her behalf, or court danger for the sake of a smile. Tudor England had something else to think about. It was busy with foreign enterprises, discovering new lands ; with commerce and trade, building up a solid foundation of wealth ; with new branches of knowledge, with fresh studies of old things, with reconstituting its religious beliefs, and with keeping up its head among the nations. Poets in the Middle Ages had sung of woman as an angel, ecclesiastical asceticism had treated her as little better than a demon, but the men of the sixteenth century were of a different mould. They had something of the modern spirit, and looked upon woman as a being to share in the common burdens and pleasures of life, not to be worshipped or shunned.

It is clear that in England women had attained to a greater degree of freedom in daily life than

on the Continent. Frederick Duke of Wirtemberg, who was in England about the year 1592, writes—

"The women have much more liberty than perhaps in any other place; they also know well how to make use of it; for they go dressed out in exceedingly fine clothes, and give all their attention to their ruffs and stuffs by such a degree indeed that, as I am informed, many a one does not hesitate to wear velvet in the streets, which is common with them, whilst at home perhaps they have not a piece of dry bread."

Increase of luxury had an injurious effect on certain industries. People were no longer satisfied with home-made products, but coveted the resources of the capital. Laments are uttered that the trade in certain towns is decaying—

"While men weare contented with suche thinges as weare made within the market townes next unto theim, then weare they of oure townes and cities well set aworke, as I knewe the time when men weare contented with cappes, hattes, girdelles and poyntes and all maner of (garmentes) made in the townes next adjoyninge; whereby the townes then weare well occupied and set aworke and yet the money paid for the same stuffe remayned in the countrie. Nowe the porest yonge man in a country can not be contented either with a lether girdle, or lether pointes, gloves, kynues or daggers made nighe home. And specially no gentleman can be content to have eyther cappe, coate, dublet, hose or shirt made in his countrey, but they must haue theire geare from London;

and yet manye thinges thearof are not theare made, but beyonde the sea; whereby the artificers of oure townes are idle." *

Queen Elizabeth made ineffectual attempts to circumscribe London, whose boundaries were rapidly enlarging under the pressure of the growing population and the constant influx of provincials and foreigners. About this time stone building began to be common, the old timber houses being replaced by more solid if less picturesque edifices.

Complaints were made of people flocking to London from the country, and wasting their substance in revels—

> "When husband hath at play set up his rest,
> Then wife and babes at home a hungry goeth."

> "The maister may keepe revell all the yeere,
> And leave the wife at home like silly foule."

Country dames did not often share in the jaunts to the capital made by their husbands. Until the seventeenth century it did not become customary for families to go to London for annual visits. Bad roads and the lack of public conveyances kept town and country apart. The squire's lady knew nothing of the bustling life led in the sombre, substantial houses of the London burgesses, for whose wives there was plenty of occupation in looking after the

* Elizabeth Lamond, "Discourse of the Commonweal."

servants and the apprentices who formed part of the household, in superintending the cooking of the bountiful meals, buying the household necessaries, and replenishing the family wardrobe. There were no newspapers, but there was abundance of gossip, a much more impressive medium of communicating news. Amusement took the form of spectacles chiefly, and the citizens and citizenesses flocked readily to a mask, a play, a procession, a cock-fight, or a bear-baiting. Women were not squeamish about unpleasant sights. They had not learnt to feel that the brutal sports so common then were degrading. It was hardly likely that they should. There were too many hangings and quarterings and burnings of human beings in London to make people sensitive about the pain of animals. The gallows were constantly working, and women had to accustom themselves to many revolting sights. Worse times were coming, but as yet the shadow of the great civil war had not darkened England.

With regard to the education of women in every-day life, there is no evidence to show that they shared in the higher learning cultivated so assiduously by the daughters of the aristocracy. What M. Paul Rousselot says in his "History of the Education of Women in France," applies equally

well to England. The majority of women in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries profited little, he considers, by the great movement known as the Renaissance. To a large extent they were outside it—

"On ne les a pas en général volontairement introduites dans ce progrès, elles y sont entrées, un peu d'elles mêmes, beaucoup par la force des choses."

When we read of women discoursing in Latin, writing in Greek, discussing philosophy and science, we must be on our guard, says M. Rousselot, from believing that the initiators of the modern spirit had any idea that the moment was come to institute for women a rational system of instruction and education.

Certainly in England there were no women of the burgess class who could discourse in Latin, and the wives and daughters of country squires were equally guiltless of any such accomplishments. No systematic attempt was made to raise the standard of women's education in the middle ranks. The founders of the endowed grammar schools in the sixteenth century never thought of girls; they only provided for boys. Queen Elizabeth, excellent scholar as she was, and keen as was her appreciation of learning, did nothing for the intellectual advancement of her female subjects. The Virgin Queen only acted like her compeers.

"Scarcely has there ever appeared, in any period or in any nation, a legislator who has made it the subject of his serious attention, and the men who are greatly interested that women should be sensible and virtuous, seem, by their conduct towards that sex, to have entered into a general conspiracy to order it otherwise." *

Sir Thomas Overbury's poem, "A Wife," expresses the sentiment of the age—

"Give me next Good, an understanding Wife,
By nature wise, not learned by much Art.
Some knowledge on her side will all my Life
More scope of Conversation impart.
* * * * *
"A passive understanding to conceive,
And judgment to discern, I wish to finde.
Beyond that, all as hazardous I leave;
Learning and pregnant wit in Woman-kinde,
What it findes malleable maketh frail,
And doth not adde more ballast, but more sail.

"Domesticke charge doth best that Sexe befit,
Contiguous businesse so to fix the minde,
That leasure space for fancies not admit,
Their leasure 'tis corrupteth Womankinde.
Else, being plac'd from many vices free,
They had to Heav'n a shorter cut then we.
Books are a part of Man's Prerogative,
In formall Ink they Thoughts and Voices hold,
That we to them our Solitude may give,
And make Time present travel that of old."

Hitherto there had been two careers open to women—marriage and the conventual life. With the sweeping away of the religious houses there

* Alexander, "History of Women."

remained only the first. English family life has been lauded as the *beau idéal* of domesticity, but, as far as women were concerned, it was a very narrow ideal. There seemed no place for the daughters who failed to find husbands. One wonders what became of the unmarried women. They were probably condemned to drudge for their relatives, like Samuel Pepys' sister, who came into his household as a servant.

There was much severity exercised towards children among all classes. Poor Lady Jane Grey pathetically relates how glad she was to go to her tutor to escape the blows, pinches, and constant reprimands which she received when in the presence of her parents, and Lady Jane was by no means of a refractory disposition. After this it is less surprising to find, at an earlier period, one of the Paston family, whose well-known letters throw so much light on domestic life in the fifteenth century, ill treated and beaten as if she were an unruly slave.

"She [Elizabeth Paston, daughter of Agnes Paston] was never in so great sorrow as she is nowadays," wrote one of the relatives in June, 1454; "for she may not speak with no man, whosoever come, ne not may see nor speak with any man, nor with servants of her mother's, but that she beareth on her hand otherwise than she meaneth; and she hath since Easter the most part been beaten once in

the week or twice, and sometimes twice on a day, and her head broken in two or three places."

Dame Paston did not approve of having marriageable daughters about her at home. One she had sent to a certain Cousin Calthorp, who, when he was making changes in his household, wished to be rid of his charge. She writes in some perturbation to her son—

"He seth she waxeth hygh, and it wer tyme to purvey her a mariage. I marvell what causeth hym to write so now; outher she hath displeased hym or elles he hath takyn her with diffraught. Therfor I pray you comune with my Cosyn Clere at London, and wete how he is dysposyd to her ward, and send me word, for I shall be fayn to send for her, and with me she shall but lese her tyme, and with ought she will be better occupied she shall often tymes meve me and put me in gret inquietenesse. Remembr what labour I had with your suster, therfor do your parte to help her forth, that may be your wurchiep and myn."

Girls married very young, and the poet who makes a daughter lament that at fifteen she had not found a husband, was probably not exaggerating.

"Good faith, before I came to this ripe groath,
I did accuse the labouring time of sloath;
Methought the yere did runne but slowe about,
For I thought each yeere ten I was without.
Being foreteene and toward the tother yeere,
Good Lord, thought I, fifteene will nere be heere!

> For I have heard my mother say that then
> Prittie maidens were fit for handsome men."

A Venetian noble who accompanied an ambassador from Venice to the English court in the sixteenth century writes—

"The want of affection in the English is strongly manifested towards their children; for after having kept them at home till they arrive at the age of seven or nine years at the utmost, they put them out, both males and females, to hard service in the houses of other people, binding them generally for another seven or nine years."

On the other hand, we find children described as—

"most ongracious grafftes, ripe and redy in all lewd libertie," through the fault of the parents and schoolmasters, "which do nother teach ther children good, nother yet chastice them when thei do evill."

In the following century people looked back with regret to the time when daughters were—

"obsequious and helpful to their parents," when "there was no supposed humiliation in offices which are now accounted menial, but which the peer received as a matter of course from 'the gentlemen of his household,' and which were paid to the knights or gentlemen by domestics chosen in the families of their own most respectable tenants; whilst in the humbler ranks of middle life it was the uniform and recognized duty of the wife to wait on her husband, the child on his parents, the youngest of the family on his elder brothers and sisters."

CHAPTER II.

THE SCHOLARS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Revival of learning in the sixteenth century—Attitude of the nobility towards Letters and Arts — No age so productive of learned ladies — The Tudor princesses and Lady Jane Grey — Sir Anthony Coke's daughters—Mary Sidney—Learned women held in esteem—Learning confined to the upper classes—A sixteenth-century schoolmaster on women's education.

THE sixteenth century was England's great literary renaissance. Fresh streams of intellectual life were poured into the nation. There was activity in all departments of thought. The study of poetry, of theology, of the classics, went on apace. The printing press was letting loose floods of knowledge. The tide swept the women of the nobility along in its course. They stand out prominently among the ranks of scholars. In place of the domestic arts, they are found immersed in classics, divinity, and philosophy. Education was not conducted on the easy, pleasant lines of our own day. Knowledge was hard to obtain. It was locked up out of reach of the indolent in languages to which

there were none of the modern keys. Literature was the great study, and familiarity with Greek and Latin essential. The tree of science had only just begun to grow, and was sorely beset by the brambles of superstition and mysticism. The arts in England could scarcely be said to exist. Foreign painters came from time to time, and rich noblemen went abroad and brought back treasures from Italy. All decorative work other than tapestries, which were sometimes of English make, was imported. Music, like dancing, was cultivated as a polite accomplishment, for private uses; but there was not the stimulus of excellent public performances by first-rate artists.

History was in the form of chronicles and romances. Stow was the great contemporary writer engaged in recording for future generations the events passing around him. Books in living languages were scarce, though not so few as when the Dowager-Duchess of Buckingham left what was deemed a notable legacy of four volumes to her daughter-in-law, Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond. French and Italian, especially the latter, were studied by the nobility with continental masters, or acquired by means of travel. Great courtesy was shown to visitors from the continent by the English aristocracy, who delighted

in having intercourse with men of other nationalities, and often surrounded themselves with foreign servants. In this way a taste was fostered for the Spanish, French, and Italian languages. Nobles who did not want to study themselves, liked to be surrounded by men of learning, and willingly gave poor authors a seat at their table. It became customary to dedicate every new book to some rich patron, and though it was a practice that opened the door to abuses, it secured, on the other hand, a subsistence to deserving authors who would otherwise have been unable to pursue their studies.

Although the nobility extended their patronage to learned men, they were not greatly given to study themselves. In the time of Henry VIII. there was such a lack of learning among laymen, that ecclesiastics had the governance of the country largely in their hands. The generality of men among the upper classes deemed the labour involved in acquiring knowledge unfit for gentlemen, who were better employed learning to hunt, shoot, sing, and dance. Roger Ascham reproaches the young gentlemen of England for their sloth in learning, and holds up for imitation the Virgin Queen—

"whose example if the rest of our nobilitie would follow, then might England bee for learning and wisdome in nobilitie a spectacle to all the world beside."

It was otherwise with women. They toiled over Latin and Greek, frequently in manuscript, for there were not many printed books in those languages; no classics had issued from Caxton's press. Hebrew was also studied, for divinity and theology occupied a good deal of attention. A Florentine, Petruccio Ubaldini, who visited England in 1551, writes in his comments on social life—

"The rich cause their sons and daughters to learn Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, for since this storm of heresy has invaded the land, they hold it useful to read the Scriptures in the original tongue."

Dr. Wotton, in his "Reflections on Antient and Modern Learning," says—

"that no age was so productive of learned women as the sixteenth century." "Learning," he says, "was so very modish that the fair sex seemed to believe that Greek and Latin added to their charms, and that Plato and Aristotle untranslated were frequent ornaments of their closets. One would think by the effects that it was a proper way of educating them, since there are no accounts in history of so many great women in any one age as are to be found between the years fifteen and sixteen hundred."

Certainly England can show a roll during that period which is in striking contrast to the records of the preceding and succeeding centuries. For sound scholarship and solid acquirements, the women

of the sixteenth century may challenge comparison with those of any subsequent period. It was not a time for brilliant authorship among women. The productions of the most renowned are not such as would be read in the present day. Latin distichs, translations of the classics and of theological works, orations in Greek and Latin, are not the writings which commend themselves to posterity, but they display a degree of erudition which was not only remarkable for that period, but would be highly commended in this age of university teaching and the advancement of women along the paths of the higher education.

The following verses by a sixteenth-century writer well express the feeling of the times:—

"You men yt read the memoryes
Of wonders done and paste,
Remember well the historys
Of women first and laste;
And tell me if I saye not true,
That women can do more than you,

"And more than any man can doo
So quicklie and so trym (fast?).
What counterpointes of pollycie,
Of arte and of artyfyce,
But women wth facylitie
Can compas and forecaste."

Perhaps queens should not be taken as examples, inasmuch as they possess advantages peculiar to their position, and their acquirements

are apt to be overstated. Henry VIII., the Sovereign Bluebeard, showed himself admirable as a father in at least one respect, and the care with which his daughters were educated goes some way towards palliating his crimes towards their mothers. If he had not obscured his own talent by his passions and vices, we should be better able to appreciate the encouragement he gave to literature and art, and his accomplishments as one of the best-educated gentlemen of the day. The tastes of the sovereign and the *personnel* of the court had a more direct influence on society than at the present time. Individual members of the nobility who cultivated learning, did a good deal in raising the tone of their immediate circle.

It may be that the excellence of the tuition given to the Princess Mary was rather due to Queen Catherine of Aragon, who procured, among other tutors for her daughter, a learned countryman of her own, Ludovicus Vives of Valencia. This preceptor succeeded to the post held by the first tutor of the princess, Dr. Lynacre, who died in 1524, when his pupil was six years old. During the short time she was under his care, he drew up a work for her on "The Rudiments of Grammar." There are probably few princesses now who are handed over to men of scholarship and learning

out of their nurses' arms, as was the eldest daughter of Henry VIII. After the learned Spaniard had instructed the princess a short time, he returned to his own country, and the king then selected Dr. John Harman.

The Princess Mary was specially proficient in Latin, for which she is commended by Erasmus, who, always ready to fall a victim to female charms, regarded learning as an extra embellishment. Speaking of this period, he says, "It is pretty enough that this sex should now at last betake itself to the ancient languages." Mary wrote excellent Latin epistles, and in later years translated Erasmus' Paraphrase on the Gospel of St. John. The preface to this work was written by the Master of Eton, Udall, who, after a courtly eulogy of the royal translator, speaks of her "over-painful study and labour of writing," whereby she had "cast her weak body in a grievous and long sickness." The work had apparently to be completed by other hands, as Queen Mary's health was in so declining a condition. She also wrote prayers and meditations.

Elizabeth shone more as a linguist. She is said to have been very conversant with Latin, French, and Italian; to have had some knowledge of Greek when quite a young girl; and at twelve years of age,

to have translated a series of Prayers and Meditations from English into Latin, French, and Italian. Her first instructor was Lady Champernon, a lady noted for her accomplishments. With Roger Ascham, she read the classics; with Dr. Grindal, Professor of Divinity, she studied theology; and, after she came to the throne, pursued her studies with great diligence. Latin she both spoke and wrote with ease and grace. In Italian she was instructed by Signore Castiglioni. Greek and Latin she was accustomed to have read to her by Sir Henry Savil and Sir John Fortescue. She was a great student of Plato, Aristotle, and Xenophon; one of Xenophon's Dialogues she translated and published, and translated two Orations of Isocrates from Greek into Latin.

Lady Jane Grey is another notable example of learning and scholarship. Fox writes of her—

"If her fortune had been as good as her bringing up, joyned with fineness of wit, undoubtedly she might have seemed comparable, not only to the house of the Vespasians, Sempronians, and mother of the Grachies; yea, to any other women besides that deserveth high praise for their singular learning; but also to the University men, who have taken many degrees of the Schools."

Lady Jane Grey's short and troublous life was lightened and cheered by study. Roger Ascham

commended her facility in Greek composition. Her studies were very extensive, for Sir Thomas Chaloner said of her that she was well versed in Hebrew, Chaldee, Arabic, French, and Italian.

None of these royal ladies were destitute of lighter accomplishments. Elizabeth, as is well known, was a very graceful dancer, and could sing and play exceedingly well; Lady Jane Grey was a musician, and clever at needlework.

But it was not royal ladies alone who were celebrated for their learning in the sixteenth century. The three daughters of Sir Anthony Coke, preceptor to Edward VI., were as accomplished as Queen Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey, and attracted the attention of the great men of the age. The eldest married Lord Burleigh, the Treasurer; the second, Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, and became the mother of the celebrated Francis Bacon; the third became wife to Lord John Russell, after the death of her first husband, Sir Philip Hoby. Sir Anthony was a father much in advance of his time. He considered that women should be educated on the same lines as men, and that they were quite as capable of acquiring knowledge. So he imparted to his clever daughters the lessons he gave to the precocious boy-king, Edward VI.

"It is," says Lloyd,* "the happiness of foreigners that their vocations are suited to their natures, and that their education seconds their inclination, and both byass and ground do wonders. It is to the unhappiness of Englishmen that they are bred rather according to their estates than their temper; and great parts have been lost, while their calling drew one away and their genius another."

Sir Anthony seems to have known how to suit his children's education to their "temper," which was keenly studious. He was excessively careful to set them a good example. "My example is your inheritance, and my life is your portion," he wrote to his eldest daughter. All his daughters were good classical scholars, could correspond in Greek, and were excellent translators.

Sir Thomas More's daughters were educated in a similar way. Margaret, wife of William Roper and her father's favourite, is the most celebrated; but all were clever, studious women, not content with light and easy studies, but attaining great proficiency in abstruse subjects.

Jane Countess of Westmoreland, whose father was the famous Fox the martyrologist, was said to be able to bear comparison with the greatest scholars of the age. The three daughters of Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, were much distinguished for their Latin distichs, and it was

* "State Worthies."

said of them that if Orpheus could have heard them he would have become their scholar.

Mary Sidney, afterwards Countess of Pembroke, sister of the famous Sir Philip Sidney, was one of the most intellectual women of her age. In the retirement of the fine old family mansion at Penshurst Place, Kent, she passed a studious, happy girlhood. The companionship of her gifted brother, and association with such men as the poet Spenser, no doubt fostered her innate love of learning. By the great poet she has been celebrated as—

> "The gentlest shepherdess that liv'd that day,
> And most resembling in shape and spirit
> Her brother dear."

Together with her brother she wrote a version of the Psalms, and on her own account a poem in celebration of Queen Elizabeth. As a centre of intellectual thought and literary life, Mary Sidney, when, in 1576, she became the wife of Henry Earl of Pembroke, and mistress of his establishment at Wilton, may be compared with Lady Holland or Lady Blessington. Poets and statesmen gathered at her hospitable board, for at Wilton Place a stately magnificence was maintained. Had the Countess of Pembroke been merely a lady of rank, she would not have left

her mark on an age when there were so many illustrious names. But her cultivation of mind made her the fit companion of the greatest intellects of the day. It is no small thing to have entertained Shakespeare, to have had Ben Jonson as a familiar guest, besides lesser poets such as Massinger and Daniel, a poet laureate of Elizabethan days, who was a great admirer of her talents. Sir Philip Sidney was much attached to his distinguished sister, to whom he dedicated his "Arcadia." It was a grief to both that in after-life they were so much separated. Dr. Donne, another poet, but more eminent as a divine, was a friend whom Mary Sidney much esteemed. It was less for what she did than for what she was that Mary Sidney is celebrated. Her great nobility of character made her pre-eminent, and her influence on her contemporaries was very marked.

There was no affectation of ignorance among the learned women of the sixteenth century. Learning among women was held in esteem. It was not thought unfeminine to speak good Latin, write correct Greek, or translate from Hebrew. Unusual and extraordinary it was undoubtedly deemed for women to show fine scholarship, but it was an unusual and extraordinary merit. The

absurd notion that the acquisition of knowledge, or intellectual ability, are things to be ashamed of, was one of the base products of eighteenth-century sentimentalism.

When we think of the great difficulties in the way of learning in the sixteenth century, we cannot but wonder at the assiduity and patience of the scholars of that period, both men and women. There were no primers, exercise-books, or well-printed dictionaries of the classical languages into English. Grammars were scarce, and were sometimes composed by the tutors for their pupils. There were no carefully prepared passages for translation with notes and explanations. The scholar had to go straight to the original, and ferret out the meaning unaided. Latin was the common medium of communication between scholars and the polite world generally. At a time when every one with any pretensions to education understood Latin, the standard of good scholarship must have been fairly high, and when we find the daughters of Sir Anthony Coke and Sir Thomas More, and other ladies, commended for their pure Latin, we feel that the encomium was well deserved, as a moderate degree of proficiency would not have attracted notice.

The learned ladies of the sixteenth century

possessed the advantage of having their attention concentrated on a few subjects. French and Italian were commonly learned by the daughters of the nobility, and these comparatively easy studies were facilitated by the constant application to the classics. Music ranked with dancing and ornamental needlework as an accomplishment. It was a fashionable study for both sexes among the highest classes. Italy then was to England, in musical matters, what Germany has since become; but there were also English composers, among whom Henry VIII. himself was included. Vocal music was extremely popular, instrumental music being in a comparatively elementary stage. The English in the sixteenth century seem to have been a very music-loving people; Erasmus says, "The most accomplished in the skill of music of any people;" and the degree to which it was practised at court in the time of Henry VIII. may be guessed from the fact that singing at sight was then a common accomplishment among the courtiers. Counterpoint was studied by those who aspired to be connoisseurs; but musical literature was very scanty, and the repertorium available for the lute and the mandoline, the clavichord, or the virginals, must soon have been exhausted.

There was less arithmetic, history, and geography

taught than is now imparted in board schools to the poorest. The curriculum for a lady of rank did not include many things which have now become matters of common knowledge among the children of the working classes. On the other hand, the education, if narrow according to modern ideas, was thorough, and without the stimulus of college life, of competitive examinations, without the prospect of rewards and honours in the shape of degrees, the attainments of women in the sixteenth century in the subjects to which they had access, were of a high order, and their knowledge of the classics was more intimate and exact than that produced by the higher education of the nineteenth century.

Learning was necessarily confined to women of position and wealth, who could afford the luxury of private tutors and the equally great luxury of books. There were, doubtless, here and there families of lower rank whose daughters would have borne favourable comparison with the titled ladies who are so conspicuous. But wide diffusion of knowledge and a high standard of education among women generally, if it existed, did not excite notice among contemporary writers as did the studious habits of the upper classes. Udall, the master of Eton in Queen Mary's reign, speaks with admiration of—

"the great number of noble women at that time in England, not only given to the study of human sciences and strange tongues, but also so thoroughly expert in Holy Scriptures that they were able to compare with the best writers, as well in enditeing and penning of godly and fruitful treatises to the instruction and edifying of realmes in the knowledge of God, as also in translating good books out of Latin or Greek into English for the use and commodity of such as are rude and ignorant of the said tongues. It was now no news in England to see young damsels in noble houses and in the courts of princes, instead of cards and other instruments of idle trifling, to have continually in their hands either psalms, homilies, and other devout meditations, or else Paul's Epistles or some book of Holy Scripture matters, and as familiarly both to read and reason thereof in Greek, Latin, French, or Italian as in English. It was now a common thing to see young virgins so trained in the study of good letters that they willingly set all other vain pastimes at naught for learning sake. It was now no news at all to see Queens and ladies of most high estate and progeny, instead of courtly dalliance, to embrace virtuous exercises of reading and writing, and with most earnest study both early and late to apply themselves to the acquiring of knowledge, as well in all other liberal artes and disciplines, as also most especially of God and his holy word."

Erasmus, in one of his discourses, gives us a glimpse of the view taken by the Church of female scholarship. He introduces a conversation between an abbot and a learned woman. The abbot contends that women would never be kept in subjection

if they were learned. They would become wiser than men. "Therefore it is a wicked mischievous thing to revive the ancient custom of educating them." *

Taken in conjunction with a remark of Erasmus in one of his letters, it is doubtful whether after all he did not deem learning wasted on women. Describing Sir Thomas More, he says, "He is wise with the wise, and jests with fools—with women especially, and his wife among them."

A more liberal view was taken by Richard Mulcaster, the master of the school founded by the Merchant Taylors' Company in 1561, in the parish of St. Lawrence Poultney. He says—

"I set not young maidens to public Grammar Scholes, a thing not used in my countrie, I send them not to the universities, having no president thereof in my countrie, I allow them learning with distinction in degrees, with difference of their calling, with respect to their endes wherefore they learne, wherin my countrie confirmeth my opinion. We see young maidens be taught to read and write, and can do both with praise; we have them sing and playe: and both passing well, we know that they learne the best, and finest of our learned languages, to the admiration of all men. For the daiely spoken tongues and of best reputation in our time who so shall denie that they may not compare even with our kinde in the best

* Mrs. Makins, "Essay to revive Antient Education of Gentlewomen."

degree. . . . Nay, do we not see in our country some of that sex so excellently well trained and so rarely qualified either for the tongues themselves or for the matter in the tongues: as they may be opposed by way of comparison if not preferred as beyond comparison even to the best Romaine or Greekish paragones be they never so much praised: to the Germaine or French gentlewymen by late writers so wel liked: to the Italian ladies who dare write themselves and deserve fame for so doing? whose excellencie is so geason as they be rather wonders to gaze at then presidentes to follow. And is that to be called in question which we both dayly see in many and wonder at in some? I dare be bould, therefore, to admit yong maidens to learne, seeing my countrie gives me leave and her custome standes for me. Their natural towardnesse should make us see them well brought up. . . . Some Timon will say, what should wymend with learning? Such a churlish carper will never picke out the best, but be alway ready to blame the worst. If all men used all pointes of learning well, we had some reason to alledge against wymen, but seeing misuse is commonly both the kinds, why blame we their infirmitie whence we free not ourselves. . . . And is not, think you, a young gentlewoman thoroughly furnished which can reade plainly and distinctly, write faire and swiftly, sing cleare and sweetly, play wel and finely, understand and speake the learned languages, and the tongues also which the time most embraseth with some logicall helpe to chop and some rhetoricke to brave. . . . Or is it likely that her children shalbe eare a whit the worse brought up if she be a Lœlia, an Hortensia or a Cornelia, which were so endued and noted for so doing. . . . The places wherein they learne

be either publike if they go forth to the elementaire schole or private if they be taught at home. The teacher either of their owne sex or of ours. . . . In teachers their owne sex were fittest in some respectes, but ours frame *them* best and with good regard to some circumstances will bring them up excellently well."

CHAPTER III.

A LADY'S EDUCATION IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

Retrogression in the seventeenth century—Tone of women's education—Mrs. Hutchinson—Lady Ann Halkett—Mrs. Alice Thornton—Mrs. Makins—The Duchess of Newcastle—General estimation of learning—Changes in social life—Some patronesses of learning.

AFTER the sixteenth century the lamp of learning flickered a good deal. The air was very unsteady; winds came blowing from all quarters. There was the adverse gale of the Civil War, which was a great peril to progress. And what followed was almost equally disastrous. Neither the austerity of the Puritans nor the licence of the Royalists was favourable to the arts of peace, and when political passions were dividing the country, it was no time for poring over books, and holding commune with philosophers and poets. Religious enthusiasm thrives by opposition, and the purity of principle has often been maintained by persecution. It is otherwise with learning and culture. They need encouragement and tending in order to blossom and

bear fruit. From a variety of causes, a period of reaction set in after the vigorous and healthy awakening in the time of the Tudors. The fault of the seventeenth century was its lack of earnestness about intellectual matters. It combined all the faults of all the ages—laxity of morals, indifference to high aims, combined with religious fanaticism and a lack of appreciation of knowledge and learning. The Puritan party were so much engrossed with religious dogmas, that they had little time to spend on purely secular thought, which they considered a frivolous if not a sinful exercise. The Royalists loved pleasure too well to give more than passing attention to serious studies. The period of the Restoration is thus described by a writer in the next century—

"Religion which had been in vogue in the late times was now universally discountenanced; the name of it was hardly mentioned but with contempt, in a health or a play. Those who observed the sabbath and scrupled profane swearing and drinking healths were exposed under the opprobrious names of puritans, fanaticks, presbyterians, republicans, seditious persons."

The advantages to be derived from intellectual liberty were not appreciated. Charles II., joking with the Royal Society, to whom he loved to propound insoluble problems, reflects the attitude

of the aristocracy towards science and literature. By that time Shakespeare was considered a little out of date and vulgar by an age of fops and *élégantes* who could read Wycherley without blushing. There was a quiet cultured set, such as Evelyn and his friends. Evelyn's daughter Mary, who died at the age of about nineteen, was a most accomplished and studious girl, and shared her father's literary labours and enjoyments. But the seventeenth century was not favourable to the production of scholars. As the intellectual horizon widened learning became less profound. Women's education was pursued on somewhat different lines. There was less scholarship among the best-educated women. We do not hear of ladies corresponding in Greek or translating from the Hebrew. The classics no longer held the chief place in the curriculum. Literature was multiplying in English and other living languages, and music and painting were more cultivated.

But there was little attempt, in the seventeenth century, to provide substitutes for what women had lost by the dissolution of the convent schools. For accomplishments, such as singing and dancing, wealthy families engaged special masters—generally French—and the domestic chaplain sometimes acted as tutor for the more solid parts of education.

Among middle-class families, however, whose means did not allow of private tuition, the girls came off badly, there being very few schools of any sort, and very scanty supplies of literature in the home.

The seventeenth century was a great period for famous painters, and the presence of numerous excellent foreign artists in England influenced the attitude of society among the higher classes towards art. It might have been thought that, with a professed pedant like James I. following the learned Queen Elizabeth, there would have been a renewed impetus towards the profounder studies. But James I. was deficient in real strength of character, and was not an intellectual force. He might have played a very fair part among a knot of schoolmen disputing over theological points, but as a sovereign his talents did not show to good advantage. Moreover, he was in every way adverse to the progress of women. He treated them as inferiors, with a ponderous levity, and nothing was further from his mind than giving any encouragement to the cultivation of learning among the ladies of the court. Under Charles I. culture would have had a fair chance in England had not political trouble intervened, and during the remainder of the century society underwent a series of changes inimical to learning.

Women's education in the seventeenth century, among those sections of society where learning was cultivated, seems to have taken a more feminine tone. Accomplishments were sought after rather than solid acquirements. There was a leaning to lighter pursuits, to what were quaintly called "virtues," such as instrumental and vocal music, dancing, and needlework. There was a dash of fine ladyism in it all. At the same time there was a parade of education. It was customary, among the families of the nobility, for the daughters to have tutors for reading and writing (which are specified as distinct subjects, not included, as now, under a general term), French, Latin, and perhaps Italian. Mrs. Hutchinson tells us that she had as many as eight tutors when she was seven years old, but she was exceptionally well instructed.

Lucy Aspley, as she was then, was a child of extraordinary abilities, of which her father was very proud. At four years old she could read English perfectly. Her brothers at school, finding she was outstripping them in Latin with her tutor at home, tried to emulate her zeal. She cared for none of the feminine accomplishments, such as needlework and dancing, and always preferred the company and conversation of older people, even as a child. With all her precocity, and in spite of the fact that

she was treated as the literary light of the family, she grew up unspoiled by flattery, and developed into one of the noblest women of her age.

Lady Anne Halkett, the daughter of Thomas Murray, preceptor to Charles I., was probably better taught than most young women of the time. She herself lays stress on the pains bestowed upon her education by her parents, but there is no mention of any profound study. She had masters for French, for writing, for dancing, and for the practice of the lute and the virginals, and a gentlewoman was employed to teach her needlework.

Mrs. Alice Thornton, who lived between 1626 and 1707, and whose family on the father's side was related to the Earl of Strafford, says that in 1632, while living in Ireland, she had—

"the best education that Kingdome could afford, having the advantage of societie in the sweet and chaste company of the Earle of Strafford's daughter, the most virtuous Lady Anne, and the Lady Arbella Wentworth, learning those qualities with them which my father ordered, namelie —the French language, to write and speak the same; singing, danceing, plaeing on the lute and theorboe; learning such other accomplishments of working silkes, gummework, sweetmeats, and other sutable huswifery, as by my mother's vertuous provision and caire, she brought me up in what was fitt for her qualitie and my father's childe."

Presumably, spelling formed one of the subjects of education; but the extremely faulty orthography of female letter-writers, even among the cultured classes, in the seventeenth century, points to a haphazard method of teaching this branch of knowledge. After making due allowance for the unsettled state of the language, and the want of uniformity in good authors, the letters of women of high rank show an extraordinary licence in orthography, which appeared to be a matter regulated by individual fancy.

Mrs. Makins, writing in 1673, says—

"I verily think women were formerly educated in the knowledge of arts and tongues, and by their education many did rise to a great height in learning. Were women thus educated now, I am confident the advantage would be very great." She adds, "I am very sensible it is an ill time to set on foot this design, wherein not only learning but vertue itself is scorn'd and neglected as pedantic things, fit only for the vulgar. . . . Were a competent number of schools erected to educate ladyes ingeniously, methinks I see how asham'd men would be of their ignorance, and how industrious the next generation would be to wipe off their reproach."

One of the most celebrated women of learning in the early part of the century was Margaret Lucas, afterwards Duchess of Newcastle, and she seems to have acquired her knowledge chiefly by

her own efforts. Sir Charles Lucas had tutors for his daughters, but half the year the family spent in London, enjoying all the diversions the capital could afford, and study was not at all strictly enforced on the girls. The Duchess wrote numerous poems and prose works of a philosophical character, and was, she tells us herself, a very rapid composer, her ideas outrunning her hand. Judged by the standard of to-day, her works seem like the voluble outpourings of a curious fancy. Her ideas are interesting rather as giving us a glimpse of the thought of her day, than valuable for intrinsic merit or freshness; but in her lifetime she was applauded by scholars with lavish adulation, partly, no doubt, on account of her rank. The heads of the University of Cambridge were full of wonder that a woman should be able to compose such works, and many scholars from other parts wrote in terms of respectful admiration and astonishment. The fulsome flatteries poured into the ears of the duchess were unworthy of their authors, but there is no doubt that her productions appeared sufficiently remarkable to her contemporaries. More than one scholar to whom the duchess sent her books, remarks on the proof her Grace has given that women are as capable of intellectual acquirements as men. One writes that she has confirmed the

statement of an old author, that women excel men; and another, that she has clearly decided the question of mental equality between the sexes.

In watching the evolution of women in regard to learning, the general estimation in which learning was held in those days has also to be noted. Gentlemen might certainly be scholars, but scholars were not considered gentlemen. The study of books, more especially the writing of them, was thought a laborious occupation unfit for those who could sit at ease and enjoy the world.

"Neither do our Nobilitie and Gentry so much affect the study of good Letters as in former times," wrote Henry Peachman in 1638, "loving better the *Active* than the *Contemplative* part of *Knowledge*, which in times of the Monasteries was more esteemed and doated on than now."

One scholar, writing to the Duchess of Newcastle, speaks of authorship as an "inferior employment" unmeet for the rank and qualities of a lady like her Grace.

Another element that has to be taken into account was the change which came over social life in the upper ranks of society. There was more going to and fro between London and the country. Formerly, people stayed quietly in their own homes from one year to another. But as travelling became more general, the custom grew up for families of

rank and wealth to spend half the year in London —the winter half—and the other half in the country. This greatly altered the conditions of family life. The season in London was a period for amusement, for seeing sights, receiving company, and going to balls and masks. There was not much time for serious studies, and the more frequent intercourse with society encouraged young daughters in a family to cultivate such accomplishments as music and dancing, to study French and Italian rather than Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and to generally avoid subjects that demanded much patience and assiduity. There were women clever and brilliant, and noted for their versatile talents. Lucy Harrington, Countess of Bedford, was one of these. She was certainly a good Latin scholar, had many accomplishments, and was a friend and favourite of the learned men of the day. Lady Wroth, niece of the celebrated Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, was another patroness of the learned, and seems to have inherited some of her aunt's ability. But we have to wait until the middle of the next century before we find any coterie of learned women, comparable with the scholars and students of the Tudor Period.

CHAPTER IV.

GLIMPSES AT GREAT LADIES.

Changes in domestic life—Lady Elizabeth Howard's household at Naworth Castle—The Countess of Sunderland—The Belvoir Castle family—The Countess of Salisbury's suit—The Countess of Pembroke and the "boon hen"—Bess of Hardwicke—Court ladies—Lady Brilliana Harley—Lady Lucas—Match-making—Seizure of an heiress.

WHEN with the Renaissance old habits of thought changed, the horizon of domestic life was enlarged. The great lady appears in a different light. She is no longer merely the loaf-giver and spinster, sitting in the shadow of her lord. With increased means of comfort, with the spread of knowledge, life became much more complex. The conditions of life did not permit that the great lady should herself take such an active part in all the domestic industries and arts which were carried on in a large household. She had other occupations. It was the steward who saw to the providing of the household stuff, to the payment of servants' wages, to the almsgiving, and even to the furnishing of the wardrobe.

Although needlework still filled a large and honoured place in the lives of women of high station, it was rather an exercise than a necessity. Girls were taught to spin, to sew, and to embroider; a great lady might assist in the devising and making of her own apparel, but more commonly she left it in the hands of the tailors and sempstresses, and when she busied herself with plain needlework it was for the poor. Great families in the country would, for ordinary purposes, employ a local tailor, who would come and do his work at the house. Lady Elizabeth Howard, of Naworth Castle, who lived in the seventeenth century, and was one of the greatest ladies of her time, with a rent-roll of £1040 a year of the money of that period, was satisfied to have the plain serge gowns which she wore for common use made by the country tailor. The flax for the household linen was spun at home and sent to a country weaver. Lady Elizabeth was a woman of simple tastes, too much engrossed with practical affairs to care for display.

The curious commissions which great ladies in the seventeenth century gave to their male friends abroad, and the presents exchanged among members of noble families, show that many ordinary articles now in domestic use were then luxuries. In 1679,

or thereabouts, the Countess of Sunderland writes to her brother, Mr. Sidney, envoy to Holland, in the following terms :—

"I desire you to lay out £20 for me in Dutch wax candles, which my Lady Temple says are very good. I would have them four to the pound, three parts, and the fourth part six to the pound; and some tea if you love me, for the last you gave was admirable."

One would like to know what quantity of candles Mr. Sidney was able to buy for £20, which represented a much larger sum then, and whether the countess kept a private cupboard in which to lock up these precious articles.

Lady Chaworth, in 1676, writes to her brother, Lord Roos, at Belvoir Castle, to thank him, among other things, for a present of some oat-cakes and a pie. She sends him in return a peck of chestnuts and five pounds of vermicelli, some portion of which, she says, is of the same quality as that supplied to the king, who had a consignment of three hundred pounds' weight. This seems a prodigious quantity, when it is remembered that farinaceous foods were not a staple article of diet. She also sends Lord Roos comfits, which she is pleased to hear that he likes, for she tells him—

"There is four pound of them, and made fresh for you of the purest sugar, though I gave a little more for them."

Lord Roos had a sweet tooth, evidently, and it is to be hoped as sound as sweet, for our ancestors took very little care of their teeth. In 1650 we find Sir Ralph Verney sending to a friend at Florence a present of "teeth-brushes and boxes," which were new-fangled Parisian articles, described by Sir Ralph as "inconsiderable toyes."

As manners improved there was less separation of the sexes and more family life. In the absence of the husband, the lady of the manor, as she may still be called, for she often enriched her lord with the broad acres of her own inheritance, was much occupied with the management of the estate. The Lady Elizabeth Howard, already mentioned, who brought as her dowry the extensive Dacres property about which there was so much litigation, always attended to the business relating to the manors during her husband's absences in London, whither she herself rarely travelled. Anne, daughter of the second Duke of Norfolk, being burdened with a husband very deficient in mental and physical parts—"Little John of Campes," fourteenth Earl of Oxford—took the control into her own hands of all the affairs of the household and the estate. She corresponded about her difficulties with Wolsey, who advised her to return with her husband to her father's roof, paying the duke a

reasonable sum for the accommodation. The countess, who had no children to aid her, was sorely beset, after her husband's death, by rapacious relatives, whom during his lifetime she had contrived to keep at bay. She complains that her park, and even her house, were broken into and her servants maltreated, and that, although the justices issued a writ against the offenders, it was not put into execution, and "doth nothing avail."

Anne Countess of Warwick, wife of the king-maker, was shamefully robbed of her possessions by her sons-in-law, the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, and was obliged, she tells us, to write many letters with her own hand, in the absence of clerks. She finally got back all her property by Act of Parliament, but she did not keep it. She was either cajoled out of her estates, or her attachment to the king, whom her husband had assisted to the throne, was all-powerful; but, whatever the cause, she passed over one hundred and eighteen manors by private compact to Henry VII.

Another great lady, Margaret Countess of Salisbury, granddaughter of Richard Earl of Salisbury, had a great deal of trouble in keeping a hold of her possessions. She was engaged in

a suit against Henry VIII. to recover a yearly income of 5000 marks from certain of her manors. The rapacious king appears to have yielded, and she afterwards generously presented him with a year's revenue as an aid in the prosecution of his wars. A revengeful lover whom she had rejected did his utmost to deprive her of her estates by filling the king's mind with suspicions as to the legality of her claim. She also suffered much annoyance from marauders, who broke into her domain and cut down her woods.

Women of property were very liable to be preyed upon by grasping sovereigns and unscrupulous ministers like Wolsey, who actually led Elizabeth Dowager Countess of Oxford to endanger the cliff at Harwich, which formed part of her estate, in order to supply him with stone for his new college at Ipswich.

The famous Anne Clifford, Countess of Pembroke and Dorset, after struggling with James I. over her inheritance, found plenty of occupation in going to law with her numerous tenants, in building, in causing "bounds to be ridden," and courts to be kept in her several manors. She seems to have divided her time pretty equally among her northern castles, travelling in state in a coach and six from Pendragon Castle to Appleby,

and thence to Skypton and Brougham. She describes her tenants as frequently obstinate and refractory, and evictions were sometimes necessary. However, in the midst of these unpleasant processes, she was building brew-houses, bake-houses, and stables, repairing decayed mansions which had not been inhabited for years, and establishing fresh almshouses for the poor.

The Countess was very tenacious of her rights, and refused to yield at any cost when it was a question of principle. On one occasion a rich clothier of Halifax, one of her tenants, would not pay the one "boon hen" which traditional custom demanded from the holder of a certain tenement. The Countess took the case to the law courts and recovered the hen, but at a cost of £200 to herself and the same amount to her adversary. She much resented interference, and when Cromwell sent down a commission to compose some differences between herself and her people, she politely but firmly refused to let the commissioners deal with the matter at all, saying she preferred to leave it to the decision of the law. As a landlord she did all she could for her county by buying everything from her neighbours and tenants, very rarely sending to London or elsewhere as other great folk in the country were

in the habit of doing, and as a mistress she was very kind to her attendants.

Anne Clifford was not singular in her taste for litigation. Walter Cary writes, in 1626—

"These three which have turned things upside down and strangely altered our estate are suits of law, suits of apparel, and drunkennesse."

With regard to the last two particulars, Anne Clifford was certainly blameless, and though she moved about in her own part of the country, she did not waste her substance on journeys to London, as Cary complained the country gentlemen were in the habit of doing. In former times, he says men

"did not long for their neighbours' land, neither sold of their own, but keeping good hospitality and plainly ever attired were very rich."

The celebrated Bess of Hardwicke, who made her first marriage in 1532, and was a widow for the fourth time in 1609, after the death of George Earl of Shrewsbury, spent much of her time and money in building. It was a passion with her to repair and to erect magnificent piles. She persuaded her second husband, Sir William Cavendish, to begin the building of Chatsworth, which she completed after his death. Near the old home of her childhood she erected a second Hardwicke Hall,

and also built a mansion at Oldcote. She has been described by her greatest detractor, Lodge, as "a builder, a buyer, a seller of estates, a money-lender, a farmer, and a merchant of lead, coals, and timber." She also built herself a magnificent mural monument in All Saints' Church, Derby. It was her fourth husband, the Earl of Shrewsbury, who had for a long time the custody of Mary Queen of Scots, of whose supposed influence "Bess" was so jealous. A significant remark which she made to Queen Elizabeth caused the Earl to be deprived of his fair charge.

The great lady in her own home appears to far better advantage than her compeers at court, who are thus caustically described by a writer of the second half of the sixteenth century—

"The women of the Courte have also their vices. For alwaie we see manie endowed with goodly giftes of the body, fayre, preatie, handsome and comely. Moreover, richly attired in purple, golde, jewels, and ryches: but all men cannot see what filthy monsters do often lurke under those faire skinnes. . . .

"They have mouthes armed for all kindes of clattering trifles with which they utter idle and foolish communication, and oftentimes displeasant to those that be compelled to heare them. For what shoulde we thinke them to speake emong themselves so many howers, but foolish and idle thinges: as how the heare should be dressed, how it should be kembed, how the heare should be coloured,

how the face should be rubbed, after what facion the garment should be playted, and with what pompe they should go, rise and sit, and what attire they should weare, to what persons they should geve place, with how many bowinges salute, what women, and whome they should kisse or not kisse, what women ought to ride upon an asse, horse, seate and be carried in a chariote or couche: what women maie weare golde, pearle, corall, chaines, ringes hanginge at their eares, bracelets, ringes and tablets and other trifles of Semiramis lawes.

"There be also ancient matrons whiche tell how many wowers they have had, how many giftes thei have receaved, with how many flatteringe wordes they have benne wowed: this woman talketh of him whome she loveth, that woman cannot skantly forbeare to speake of him whom she hateth, and every one thinketh that she speaketh with the admiration of other women, sometimes they maintaine talke with fonde quippes or very impudent lies. There wante not emonge them cruell hatredes and eger brawlinges, malicious detractions, backebitinges, false accusations and whatsoever be the vices of a naughtie tongue."

All the blame is laid upon the wives by this moralist, and the husbands he depicts as long-suffering martyrs—

"O how sorrowful do thei make their good husbandes when continually they objecte to them their lineage, dowrie, beautie, and other mens mariages, and with scoldinge and tauntinge do weary their husbandes, they alwaies lamente, whilst they dispise housholde and temperate fare, and twite their husbandes with the courtly excesse and being enured

in pleasant fantasies and gloriouse ostentation do consume theire riches upon superfluous ornamentes, they bring houses by ruine, sometimes they enforce their miserable husbandes to dishonest and naughtie gaines."

Lady Brilliana Harley, who lived through the Civil War, stands out in pleasing contrast as a quiet domestic character, a model housewife. While her husband, who was actively engaged on the Parliamentarian side, was away from home, she watched over the family interests with the greatest solicitude, and seems to have been her own housekeeper and man of business. At one time she was busy with repairs and alterations to the house, and mentions having to pay five shillings a day to plumbers and five shillings a hundred to them in addition for "casting lead." She was constantly sending provisions to her son at Oxford University, and sometimes to her husband, and describes with such minuteness the contents of the pies that one feels she must have assisted in the making. Very big pies they were; a couple of chickens would be added as a kind of make-weight, and one of these pasties contained two whole turkeys. As this was a present to her son at Oxford, it may be supposed that Lady Brilliana had hospitable thoughts for the other undergraduates.

Lady Lucas, mother of the learned Duchess of

Newcastle, was "very skilful in leases, setting of lands, court keeping, ordering of stewards"—useful talents, seeing that she married a rich husband. After the Civil War, her daughter, who presumably inherited some portion of the property which her mother had so carefully guarded, was reduced to great straits. The Duke of Newcastle's estates were sold by the Commonwealth, and, the Duke being made a delinquent, his wife was deprived of the usual allowances. She retired to Antwerp, but returned to England and spent a year and a half unsuccessfully trying to obtain some compensation. However, as her chief interest lay in literature, the absence of outward show in her surroundings did not greatly affect her, and she bore her losses very philosophically:

Dependent as has been woman's position up to the present century, in all the important relations of life, she has always been called upon as a great lady to bear responsibilities and fulfil duties of no light character. In mediæval times they were chiefly domestic, but none the less weighty, for the health and comfort of the household depended upon the "bread-giver." As social conditions altered, we see the great lady extending her duties outside her own walls, and engaged in what is almost public work. She is frequently drawn into the current of political

life, and her position is considerably affected by the religious changes in the country. She comes into prominence as an independent actor in the drama of history, forced oftentimes to stand alone, and beset by trials and cares which only belong to those who have much to lose. In times when the power of the sovereign was more absolute, the position of persons of property and influence, whether men or women, was less secure, and they were liable to a rise or fall of fortune according to the caprice of the monarch. A great lady in the present day could not be brought into collision with the sovereign over the rights of property, as were Margaret Countess of Salisbury and Anne Countess of Pembroke. There is no longer that intimate personal relation between the sovereign and the subject.

The hereditary right of succession to titles of nobility granted by the Norman kings, without distinction of sex, greatly affected the position of women among the higher classes. They acquired a dignity and importance in the eyes of rulers which otherwise they would not have possessed. An heiress who could convey a title and lands to her husband was a personage to be reckoned with and considered. There are numerous instances of men claiming titles and privileges by virtue of their wives'

position. Richard Neville gained the earldom of Salisbury, and his son that of Warwick, by marriage with heiresses. But while a woman could thus confer advantages of a substantial kind upon her husband, she still lacked that control over her own property which characterized the position of a wife until recent times. Women's marriage portions were denounced by writers in the seventeenth century as the cause of wedded misery and sin—

"men and women, being byassed by interest in marriage and not having that firm friendship and love for each other, do seek for a greater happiness abroad."

Marriages were arranged among people of good estate and condition with a very frank display of mercenary motives. For instance, we find various relatives of the excellent Sir Ralph Verney anxiously engaged in helping him, after his wife's death in 1656, to find an heiress for his son. One, Mrs. Sherrard, writes that she has discovered a lady whom she thinks would be a suitable mate for young Edmund Verney—

"Her father will give her five thousand pounds, and hath but on dafter more, and she is sickly and never licke to mary, and if not shee will have more than enouf, for it is beleved that her father is worth above thirty thousand pounds, and dooth daily incres in welth. I hear shee is not but of a very good disposition."

Another relative writes—

"Here is a match for your sown, Mr. Wilson's daughter of Surrey (formerly a cittizen) that I think worthy yur consideration; they offer £5,500."

People used plain language in the seventeenth century, and when a match was proposed it was in out-spoken terms. The young people were treated as pawns by their respective guardians, and instead of lawyers settling matters, it was the parents who wrangled over property and drove bargains. There is little difference in this respect between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the following letter of Lady Katherine Berkeley, though it belongs to the Tudor period, might well have been written a hundred years later. Lady Berkeley was wife of Henry, first Lord Berkeley, to whom she was married in the reign of Queen Mary. She is writing to her confidential man of business, John Smyth, about her son's marriage.

"I have received your letter, but doe not think good to show it to my lord least hee should leave his suits in law whereof I have soe good hope to a dangerous event, with an imagination that out of his own judgment hee could conclude a profitable end upon the overture now made. These imaginations you know have not produced the best effects. If the motion for my son's marriage proceed I doe then believe the politicke lady will bee glad to come to an end; yet doe I fear her proffer rather proceeds of policy

then from sincere meaning. I have observed that when she sees anything bending to our good, then shee proffers an agreement, and yet proceeds in lawe with all extremity." She concludes by requesting that "whosoever intends to match with my son shall only deale with my lord and mee."

This really meant with Lady Katherine herself. She had but a poor opinion of her husband's ability, and was exceedingly anxious to keep him by her side. She does not at all approve of his going to London by himself to negotiate marriages or any other business, being confident that he will only lose his money.

"At London younge crafty courtiers will lay baits which will bee swallowed with danger; the safest way is to keep him from London."

Many romances have been written on the carrying off of heiresses by bold suitors. During the Commonwealth some effort was made to prevent scandals of this kind and save women from being married against their will. There was one case that excited a good deal of attention in October, 1649. Mistress Jane Puckeringe was abducted from Greenwich Park while walking with her maids, close to her own house. She was the daughter of Sir Thomas Puckeringe, and an heiress. The abductors were some people named

Walsh, a Worcestershire family. Joseph Walsh and his friends seized Mistress Puckeringe, mounted her on a horse, and, having a hoy in readiness, went across to Dunkirk. Thence they went to Nieuport, in Flanders, and shut her up in a religious house. As soon as the affair was made known, there was a great stir in the official world, and warrants were issued for her recovery and for the punishment of Walsh and his companions. Walsh maintained that there had been a marriage ceremony performed. The Spanish ambassador was appealed to, and steps taken that every one concerned in the affair might be arrested. The Council of State in England sent over a Mrs. Magdalen Smith, armed with letters of authority, to seek for the lost heiress and bring her back; and a ship was ordered to go to Nieuport to be in readiness to receive her. The English agent at Brussels, Peter Thelwell, was told to turn his attention to the matter. Still, the winter sped away and Mistress Puckeringe was not restored to her friends, so in March the Council of State again took action and wrote to the archduke. Mr. Peter Thelwell, on his own responsibility, appealed to Prince Charles, which was distasteful to the officers of the Commonwealth, who were not disposed to have any dealings with the Cavalier party, and at last in June, some eight

months after the abduction, the lady was sent back to England in a man-of-war, and her captors were surrendered to the English authorities and indicted for felony, the supposed marriage being set aside.

CHAPTER V.

EVERY-DAY LIFE IN THE STUART PERIOD.

Puritan influence—Neglect of women's education—The boarding-out system for girls—Sir Matthew Hale on the education of girls—Manners and customs—Diversions of great ladies—Rules for behaviour—John Evelyn on manners—Effects of the Civil War—Simplicity of home life—Lady Anne Halkett—Position of wives—A contemporary writer on husbands.

THE Civil War had raised up two parties in England, divided as much upon ethics as upon politics. With the extremists on either side, women fared badly. They were between two camps, both equally noxious in their way—the libertines and the ascetics.

"Under the Commonwealth society assumed a new and stern aspect. Women were in disgrace; it was everywhere declared from the pulpit that woman caused man's expulsion from Paradise, and ought to be shunned by Christians as one of the greatest temptations of Satan. 'Man,' said they, 'is conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity; it was his complacency to women that caused his first debasement; let man not therefore glory in his shame; let him not worship the fountain of his corruption.'

Learning and accomplishments were alike discouraged, and women confined to a knowledge of cooking, family medicines, and the unintelligible theological discussions of the day."

If Cromwell's "Saints," with their deadly hatred of Roman Catholicism, had been told that their views coincided with certain portions of the early teaching of the abhorred Church, they would have vehemently repelled the accusation. But the Puritans, in their revolt against beauty and pleasure, in their cramped conception and distorted views of the position of women, were only following the lead of the Fathers and the monks of the fourth century, who made of Christianity a revolting and immoral form of asceticism.

A kind of moral dislocation was going on, forming a canker in social life. With the excesses of the court on the one hand and the austerities of the Puritans on the other, there was a constant interaction going on, each party goading the other into greater extremes. The deterioration of moral tone on the one side, and the perversion of thought on the other, affected the national life injuriously, and retarded the intellectual progress of women.

There was, to begin with, an unstable throne. The Stuarts were weak rulers, and the people felt the relaxing of the strong hand of the Tudors.

James I., untrained for his position, was a very undesirable sovereign, and earned for himself ridicule and dislike. One of his peculiarities was to affect a great contempt for women, and to scoff at men who treated them with respect. No wonder that he was held in abhorrence by the court ladies, and that there were loud complaints of his Majesty's want of gallantry.

Then there was a tendency to listlessness, and especially to mental inertia, after the revival of learning in the sixteenth century. The tension could not be sustained. And there were special difficulties arising from the circumstances of the time. The destruction of so many seats of learning by the dissolution of the Religious Houses was a blow to education. Nothing had arisen to take the place of the monastic schools. How little provision there was may be judged by the following remarks, made on the establishment of a school for the sons of gentlemen in the second half of the seventeenth century :—

"It is sufficiently known that the subjects of his Majestie's dominions have, naturally, as noble minds and as able bodies as any nation of the earth, and therefore deserve all accommodations for the advancing of them either in speculation or action. Neverthelesse such hath been the neglect or undervalueing of ourselves and our

own abilities, and over-valueing of forreigne teachers, that hitherto no such places for the education and trayning up of our own young nobilitie and gentrie in the practise of arms and arts have been instituted here in England as are in Italy, France, and Germany, but that by a chargeable and sometimes an unfortunate experience we, to our own losse and disgrace, doe finde the noble and generous youth of this kingdome is sent beyond the seas, to learn such things at excessive rates, from strangers abroad, wherein they might be as well, and with lesse expense and danger, instructed here at home."

If little attention were given to providing for the training of youths, still less was paid to that of girls, for whom there was not the compensation of being "sent beyond the seas." Even for a gentleman's daughters it was not thought necessary that they should learn anything thoroughly except housewifery.

"Let them learne plaine workes of all kind so they take heed of too open seeming. Instead of song and musick let them learn cookery and laundry, and instead of reading Sir Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia,' let them read the grounds of good huswifery. I like not a female poetesse at any hand: let greater personages glory their skill in musicke, the posture of their bodies, their knowledge in languages, the greatnesse and freedome of their spirits, and their arts in arraigning of men's affections at their flattering faces: this is not the way to breede a private gentleman's daughter." *

* "The Art of Thriving."

The author of the above remarks suggests that where there were several daughters, one should be left with the mother, and the others drafted off into some other household, such as that of a merchant, or lawyer, or country gentleman, to gain experience and multiply their matrimonial chances.

It is obvious that the custom of sending children away to board in families was still common in the seventeenth century, and that the domestic ideal had not much enlarged. Women are still to study housewifery before all else, and to shun learning as an unprofitable thing. The profession of marriage is the only one proper to women. "Loke to thi doughten," advises an early English poet—

"And geve hem to spowsynge as soone as thei ben ablee."

In France the education of girls was much neglected.

"Il est honteux, mais ordinaire de voir des femmes qui ont de l'esprit et de la politesse, ne savoir bien prononcer ce qu'elles lisent; ou elles hesitent, ou elles chantent en lisant: au lieu qu'il faut prononcer d'un ton simple et naturel, mais forme et uni. Elles manquent encore plus grossièrement pour l'ortogrape, ou pour la manière de former ou de lier les lettres en écrivant."

Fénélon goes on to suggest that girls should learn something of the laws and regulations of their country—

"ce que c'est qu'un contrat, une substitution, un partage des cohéritiers . . . ce que c'est biens meubles et immeubles. Si elles se marient toutes leurs principales affaires rouleront la-dessus."

In every age there is always some one to act the part of *laudator temporis acti.* Sir Matthew Hale, the celebrated Lord Chief Justice, bemoans the degeneracy of his own period. He says—

"In former times the education and employment of young gentlewomen was religious, sober, and serious, their carriage modest, and creditable was their habit and dress. When they were young they learned to read and to sew; as they grew up they learned to spin, to knit, to make up their own garments; they learned what belonged to housewifery. . . . And now the world is altered; young gentlewomen learn to be bold, talk loud and more than comes to their share, think it disparagement for them to know what belongs to good housewifery or to practise it. . . . They know the ready way to consume an estate and to ruin a family quickly, but neither know nor can endure to learn or practise the ways and methods to save it or increase it; and it is no wonder that great portions are expected with them, for their portions are commonly all their value. . . . If a fit of reading come upon them, it is some romance, or play book, or love story; and if they have at any time a fit of using their needle, it is some such unprofitable or costly work that spends their friends or husbands more than it is worth when it is finished."

Domestic life was changing, and the habits and customs of former times were being modified. The

simple ways of old did not suffice. There were too many distractions, at least in London, for women to sit down contentedly with the resources of their grandmothers. Among the well-to-do country gentlemen it was becoming customary to bring their families to London for the season, which was then the winter, and this greatly altered the tone of domestic life. To women confined to a country village with little change of scene or occupation, it meant as much as the "grand tour" in the next century. A rebound naturally followed the gloomy days of the Commonwealth, when—

"there were no comedies or other diversions (which were forbidden not only as ungodly but for fear of drawing company or number together), and there was no business for any man that loved monarchy or the family of Stuart; so that the nobility and gentry lived most in the country."

The Puritan movement retarded the intellectual advance of women. The clearer thought which the Renaissance brought was obscured, the ideals that were beginning to enlarge the purpose of life were narrowed, and a check was put upon mental growth. As by the Roman Catholic Church women were taught to submit their minds and consciences to the priest, so under the sway of Puritanism they were taught that all nature's gifts to mind or body were so many snares, that true life consisted in a

crushing out of all aims and desires not connected with the saving of the soul, a process that was apparently facilitated by a constant contemplation of never-ending tortures supposed to be in reserve for the greater portion of mankind.

With all its tyranny and its perverted teaching on the subject of women's position, the Roman Church was a great civilizing, educating power, the only one for centuries. Puritanism was the reverse. It aimed at undoing what had been accomplished, at checking progress. At a time when the nation needed every stimulus that could be applied to mental exertion, when political strife was choking the path of culture, Puritanism stepped in with a denunciation of learning and art as perils to humanity.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that Puritanism, with its uncompromising treatment of vice, helped to raise the standard of social purity and the ideal of womanhood. Like the fire which followed the plague, Puritanism came as a great cleansing force. But, like the fire, it destroyed while it purified. Under its teaching many attained to a high ideal of life. Every religion has its saints, and the stress and suffering of the age were calculated to bring out the qualities that go to the making of heroes and martyrs. The Puritan

maiden and the Puritan wife stand for some of the noblest types of womanhood.

After the Restoration, the standard of living went up, and luxury increased as the nation righted itself after the turmoil and loss occasioned by war.

"In 1688 there were on the 'Change more men worth £10,000 than there were in 1650 worth £1000; that £500 with a daughter was, in the latter period, deemed a larger portion than £2000 in the former; that gentlewomen in those earlier times thought themselves well clothed in a serge gown which a chambermaid would, in 1688, be ashamed to be seen in; and that besides the great increase of rich clothes, plate, jewels, and household furniture, coaches were in that time augmented a hundredfold."

In dealing with the position of women during this period, it has to be taken into account that what would be called society was stamped with the manners of the court of Charles II. The court party forgot its former troubles and revelled in gaieties. The example was infectious, and the general laxity and extravagance were so marked that even the king himself referred to it in his speech at the close of the Parliamentary Session of 1661–2.

"I cannot but observe," he said, "that the whole nation seems to be a little corrupted in their excess of living; sure all men spend much more in their clothes, in their diet, and all other expences than they have been used to

do; I hope it has been only the excess of joy after so long suffering that has transported us to these other excesses, but let us take heed that the continuance of them does not indeed corrupt our natures. I do believe I have been faulty myself; I promise you I will reform, and if you will join with me in your several capacities, we shall by our example do more good both in city and country than any new laws would do."

It was the reign of the senses. Beauty was the road to greatness for women, and to beauty and wit all other qualities yielded. The great ladies who stand out most prominently on the canvas are the royal favourites, the exquisite frail beauties who dazzle the vision and eclipse the women of sterner mould. Women forgot that they had any other *rôle* to play but one—that of syren. Those who had no power to captivate dropped into the background, were pushed aside, and forgotten. The greatest lady was she who could sell herself at the highest price, whose charms drew the largest number of bidders. What she gloried in was the rank and number of her lovers, and her ambition was to flaunt her conquests in the eyes of other women. Lady Castlemaine, Francis Stuart, Louise de Querouaille, and Nell Gwynn of immortal memory, together with many others whose task was the subjugation of man, represent the society of the Restoration period.

The disintegration of the times no doubt militated against high ideals, although the Civil War itself gave rise to the display of heroic virtues on the part of both men and women. The stern and awful discipline of the sword, far from degrading, produced a nobler type of womanhood. Through the trials entailed by ruined fortunes and blasted careers, through the agonies of bereavement, women passed triumphant, but they were not proof against the war of social forces. The conflict of feeling between the opposing parties on other than State questions sent both to extremes. The Royalists, in their hearty hatred of austerity, rushed into a wild worship of the senses. The Puritans, to express their horror of the worldliness of their foes, assumed virtues they did not possess. It has been averred that if we study the characters and lives of the great ladies of the Puritan party, we shall find much laxity under the guise of strictness. It would not be matter of surprise if, in some cases, this were so, though the bulk of the party seem free from such a reproach. The general tone of society was lowered from various causes. It is seen in everything, in the literature, on the stage, in the habits of the day. The coarse tastes of the upper classes show that the standard of public propriety was not at all commensurate with the degree of enlightenment

which that age enjoyed. Wanting higher intellectual interests, women in fashionable life filled up their time with cards and dice, and if they read anything they read romances of very poor quality. This condition of things continued through the century.

"Were the men," wrote Mary Astell in 1694, "as much neglected and as little care taken to cultivate and improve them, perhaps they would be so far from surpassing those whom they now despise, that they themselves would sink into the greatest stupidity and brutality. The preposterous returns that the most of them make to all the care that is bestow'd on them renders this no uncharitable nor improbable conjecture."

John Evelyn speaks of great ladies suffering themselves to be treated in taverns—

"where a courtesan in other cities would scarcely vouchsafe to be entertain'd; but you will be more astonish'd when I shall assure you that they drink their crowned cups roundly, strain healths through their smocks, daunce after the fiddle, kiss freely and team it an honourable treat."

And this, he goes on to say, was not confined to the lower or the more "meretricious" circles, but was a common spectacle in good houses where such sports were the afternoon diversion.

The following letter from that lively young lady of fashion, Bridget Noel, to her sister, the Countess

of Rutland, in April, 1687, shows what sort of diversions occupied the aristocracy.

"I am extreme sory it is not poseble for us to wat of my deare sister suner than the 28 of May, for hear is a coking and hors matches which we have promesed to be at. My Lord Toumand will be at the great coking, and Barney and Lord Grandson and a great many more lords that I doe not know ther name, it is sade hear that it will be as great a match as ever has been. Barney intends to back our coks with thousands, for he is of our side. . . . The great coking dos not begin tell the 29 and twenty of June, but we have a letel wan begins of Whesen Monday."

In 1663, among the rules laid down for the behaviour of men who wish to be considered well-bred, occurs the following recommendation—

"It is not becoming a person of quality when in the company of ladies to handle them roughly . . . to kiss them by surprize; to pull off their hoods; to snatch away their handkerchiefs; to rob them of their ribbands and put them in his hat; to force their letters or books from them; to look into their papers, etc. You must be very familiar to use them at that rate; and unless you be so nothing can be more indecent or render you more odious."

Such admonitions now would be considered an impertinence if addressed to a club of factory hands.

We must give the seventeenth century credit for introducing some refinements which undoubtedly

had an influence on the position of women. Social customs are useful indices to national character, and daily habits often give the key to the moral standard. As long as coarse feeding and heavy drinking prevailed, there was a barrier to social intercourse between the sexes. When the ale and wine, which had been habitually drunk at every meal, were replaced by coffee and tea, it was an undoubted gain to both health and manners. The taste became more refined, repasts ceased to be orgies unfit for the presence of women. John Evelyn considered the custom of gentlemen leaving ladies to themselves after dinner, or rather of the ladies quitting the gentlemen, as barbarous, and it certainly had its origin in barbarous manners. He would doubtless have been astonished if he could have foreseen that the custom continued in force for more than two hundred years after his time, when regular drinking-bouts had ceased.

Evelyn's complaint of the indelicacy of ladies speaking of gentlemen by their Christian names is a little hypercritical. It was the manners that needed alteration more than the speech. He is shocked to hear such talk as—

"Tom P. was here to-day. I went yesterday to the Cours with Will R., and Harry M. treated me at such a tavern."

Surely what Evelyn calls, with a fine scorn, this "particular idiom" and these "gracefull confidences" were not inconsistent with the character of ladies who consented to be treated at taverns. De Cominges, ambassador from France in the reign of Charles II., observes that—

"excesses in taverns and brothels pass among people of note merely for gallantries, and even women of good condition do not refuse a gallant to accompany him to drink Spanish wine."

It hardly becomes a Frenchman to comment on the coarseness of the English, considering the licentiousness among his own people. In France marriage was a constant subject of satire,* and much of the profligacy of our court and society was due to French influence. The French nobility hated the bourgeoisie, and could not forgive them for their higher moral tone.†

The Puritans, in their war against vice, endeavoured to lay waste the fields of culture and learning. Everything which ministered to the pleasure of the senses they treated as a snare to be avoided. The remedy which they applied to the ills of society was in itself a disease. George Fox, declaiming against the schoolmistresses who teach young women "to play of instruments and

* Bouchot, "La Famille d'Autrefois." † Michelet.

music of all kinds," shows the attitude of the Puritan party in the matter of ordinary education. A catch, a song, or a dance, Fox looked upon as destructive of modesty, things leading to wantonness, and only fitted "for them that live in the lusts of the world." It was little wonder that, with learning at a discount and accomplishments denounced as sinful, women became frivolous and narrow. The light-hearted, in rebellion against the austerities of their Puritan neighbours, plunged into excesses, and the more serious subsided into a round of domestic drudgery.

To men of the old order the times seemed sadly out of joint.

"All relations were confounded by the *several sects in religion* which discountenanced all forms of reverence and respect as reliques and marks of superstition. Children asked not blessing of their parents; nor did they concern themselves in the education of their children, but were well content that they should take any course to maintain themselves that they might be free from that expense. The young women conversed without any circumspection or modesty, and frequently met at taverns and common eating houses; and they who were stricter and more severe in their comportment became the wives of the seditious preachers or of officers of the army. The daughters of noble and illustrious families bestowed themselves upon the *divines of the time* or other low and unequal matches. Parents had no manner of

authority over their children, nor children any obedience or submission to their parents; but every one did that which was good in his own eyes." *

The loss of property occasioned by the Civil War caused great domestic upheavals. Many a family was brought to the brink of ruin. It was then that the women bestirred themselves. The daughters of men whose estates had been confiscated, the wives who had brought their husbands dowers, finding themselves denuded, made strenuous efforts to recover their possessions, in the absence through death or enforced exile of their male protectors. The Duchess of Newcastle, who was herself a sufferer,† looked with grave disapprobation upon the more energetic of her sex at this juncture. She complains that—

"women become pleaders, attornies, petitioners and the like, running about with their several causes, complaining of their several grievances, exclaiming against their several enemies, bragging of their several favours they receive from the powerful; thus trafficing with idle words, bringing in false reports and vain discourse."

There were, of course, pretenders among the numerous claimants, people who, as the duchess avers, "made it their trade to solicit."

As a rule, however, women in everyday life

* "Life of Clarendon." † See p. 166.

were secluded from the bustle of public affairs. According to Walpole, after the Restoration, the really respectable, well-conducted members of the female sex were neither seen nor heard outside their own home circle. That they led very dull lives seems pretty obvious, for they had neither the resources of learning and culture nor the distractions of society. But they enjoyed more personal freedom than women on the Continent. The Prince of Tuscany, who visited England, observes of the women—

"They live with all the liberty that the custom of the country authorizes. This custom dispenses with that rigorous constraint and reservedness which are practised by the women of other countries, and they go whithersoever they please, either alone or in company."

Gentlewomen of good position were accustomed, in the seventeenth century, to live in a simple way, within the four walls of their home, occupied with domestic affairs. The wife of Sir John Coke, who was Secretary of State in the reign of Charles I., when she writes to her husband from the country, discourses to him of the children and of the needle-work she is doing for the baby in homely fashion, and thanks him for sending her a new gown and hat, as if she were unused to fine clothes. Lady Anne Halkett, who played a notable part in the

political troubles of her day, lived a quiet life enough when public affairs did not demand her attention, and spent her time like any good housewife. She was fond of gathering herbs and compounding powders and conserves for the sick poor.

"She was ever imployed either in doing or reaping good: in the summer season she vyed with the bee or ant, in gathering herbs, flowers, worms, snails, etc., for the still or limbeck, for the mortar or boyling pan, etc., and was ordinarily then in a dress fitted for her still-house; making preparations of extracted waters, spirits, ointments, conserves, salves, powders, etc., which she ministred every Wednesday to a multitude of poor infirm persons, besides what she dayly sent abroad to persons of all ranks who consulted her in their maladies."

Mary Astell, however, who was so anxious about the intellectual advancement of her sex, blames Englishwomen for not excelling in the domestic talents, and upholds the example of the Dutch women, who, she says, not only manage all the household affairs, but—

"keep the books, balance the accounts, and do all the business with as much dexterity and exactness as their own or our men can do."

Englishwomen could certainly not have coped with accounts if their arithmetic were on a par with their spelling. But they appear to have had

complete control over domestic matters, or at least to have impressed foreigners with that belief.

"So great," wrote one visitor, "is the respect which the English entertain for their women, that in their houses the latter govern everything despotically, making themselves feared by the men, courageous as they are on other occasions."

In the opinion of a contemporary English writer,* husbands were by no means free agents—

"There is also the want of halfe a man's liberty in marriage; for he is not absolutely himselfe, though many believe when they are going to Church upon their wedding day they are going into the land of liberty. . . . For my part I am not married; if I were I should finde my wings clipt and the collar too streight for my neck."

* Henry Peacham.

CHAPTER VI.

PETITIONERS TO PARLIAMENT.

The city dames during the Civil War—They petition Parliament for peace—Reception of the petition—The military called out—Petition from tradesmen's wives for redress of grievances—Pym's reply—Women's memorial to Cromwell against imprisonment for debt—Sufferers during the Monmouth Rebellion—Petition against Judge Jeffreys—Hannah Hewling petitions the king.

WHILE the war was proceeding between Charles I. and the Parliament, there was a good deal of agitation among the City dames, who, though not obliged to stand siege and battery, were deeply interested in the issues of the struggle. As members of the commercial classes, the disastrous effects of a civil war appealed to them with peculiar force. They lamented the destruction of property as well as the loss of life, the stoppage of trade, and the general dislocation of society. And as women of great earnestness in religion, they conceived a horror of this slaughter among men of the same nation—indeed, of the same kindred. At length they could bear it no longer. They resolved to put forth some protest. In the year 1643 came their opportunity.

The City of London had just been petitioning the Commons against the propositions for peace which had been under consideration in the House of Lords. Their lordships were very anxious to stop the desolation caused by the war, and framed some propositions to the king, which they ordered that the Speaker should introduce to the Commons. There was a very hot debate on these propositions, and the aldermen and common council, greatly incensed at the idea of any accommodation which they feared would be destructive, as they expressed it, of their "religion, laws, and liberties," promised help for the continuance of hostilities if the Parliament would stand firm and reject all overtures. The House of Commons were so worked upon by this petition, that they returned their hearty thanks to the City and stopped all further negotiations. Thereupon the London citizenesses bestirred themselves, and, with white silk ribbons in their hats, repaired in great numbers to the House of Commons with a counter petition in favour of peace. The petition is described as that of "many civilly disposed women inhabiting the cities of London, Westminster, and the parts adjacent." It ran thus—

"That your petitioners, though of the weaker sex, do too sensibly perceive the ensuing desolation of this kingdom unless by some timely means your honours provide

for the speedy recovery thereof. Your honours are the physicians that can by God's special and miraculous blessing (which we humbly implore) restore this languishing nation, and our bleeding sister the kingdom of Ireland, which hath now almost breathed her last gasp. We need not dictate to your eagle eyed judgments the way; our only desire is that God's glory in the true Reformed Protestant Religion may be preserved; the just prerogatives and privileges of king and parliament maintained; the true liberties and properties of the subject, according to the known laws of the land, restored; and all honourable ways and means for a speedy peace endeavoured. May it therefore please your honours that some speedy course may be taken for the settlement of the true Reformed Protestant Religion for the glory of God and the renovation of trade for the benefit of the subject, they being the soul and body of the kingdom. And your petitioners with many millions of afflicted souls, groaning under the burden of these times of distresses, shall (as bound) pray, etc."

Rushworth, in his "Historical Collections," gives a graphic account of the presentation of this petition. He says it was brought up by "two or three thousand women, but generally of the meanest sort;" that the House sent out a deputation of three or four members with the answer that they were—

"no ways enemies to peace, and that they did not doubt in a short time to answer the ends of their petition, and desired them to return to their habitations. But the

women, not satisfied, remain'd thereabouts; and by noon were encreased to 5000 at the least; and some men of the rabble in womens cloaths mixt themselves amongst them, and instigated them to go on to the Commons door and cry 'Peace, Peace,' which they did accordingly, thrusting to the door of the House at the upper stairs head; and as soon as they were pass'd, a part of the Trained Band (that usually stood sentinel there) thrust the soldiers down and would suffer none to come in or go out of the House for near two hours. The Trained Band advised them to come down, and first pulled them; and afterwards to fright them shot powder. But they cry'd out, nothing but powder; and having brickbats in the yard, threw them apace at the Trained Band, who then shot bullets, and killed a ballad singer with one arm, that was heartning on the women, and another poor man that came accidentally. Yet the women not daunted, cry'd out the louder at the door of the House of Commons, 'Give us these traitors that are against peace that we may tear them to pieces, give us that dog Pym.' At last ten of Waller's troopers (some of them cornets) having his colours in their hats, came to pass by the women, who would needs have the soldiers colours out of their hats, and took away the ribbons from two of them, and call'd them Waller's dogs. Whereupon they drew their swords, and laid on some of them flatways, but seeing that would not keep them off at last cut them over the hands and faces, and one woman lost her nose; whereof 'twas reported, she afterwards died. As soon as the rest of the women saw blood drawn they ran away from the Parliament House, and scatter'd themselves in the Church-yard, the palace yard, and places adjacent. And about an hour after the

House was up, a troop of horse came and cudgell'd such as staid with their canes and dispersed them. But unhappily, a maid-servant that had nothing to do in the tumult, was shot as she pass'd over the church-yard. The trooper that did it was sent to the Gate House, in order to his trial for her death; but he alledged his pistol went off by mischance. Serjeant Francis and one Mr. Pulsford were committed for encouraging this Female Riot."

When the "Saints" plundered the Royalists of their possessions, the women of the despoiled families went in person to the Committee of Sequestration sitting in Goldsmiths' Hall, to try and recover some of their property. Mothers leading their children, some of them widows, thronged the hall daily.

> "The gentry are sequestered all;
> Our wives you find at Goldsmiths' Hall,
> For there they met with the devil and all." *

In the first year of the Protectorate there was a petition presented to the Commons by tradesmen's wives, praying for a redress of grievances. They assembled in great crowds before the doors of the House, and the commander of the guard, Serjeant-Major Skippon, aghast at the increasing numbers, asked the House what he was to do, for the women had told him—

"that where there was one now there would be five

* W. H. Wilkins, "Political Ballads."

hundred the next day, and that it was as good for them to die here as at home."

The major was told to use fair words and persuade them to go away, but down they came, as they had threatened, the next day, with a petition described as that of the—

"Gentlewomen, Tradesmen's wives, and many others of the female sex, all inhabitants of the City of London and the Suburbs thereof."

The phraseology of the petition, as well as the substance, shows the Puritan character of the petitioners.

The grievances which these tradesmen's wives were so earnest to get removed had nothing to do with duties levied on merchandize, or any other of the hardships of which traders were wont to complain, such as the importation of foreign goods and the presence of foreign artisans and merchants. This petition was inspired by dread of the Papists, lest they should commit in England the "insolencies, savage usage, and unheard of rapes" which they had been committing upon women in Ireland.

"And have we not just cause to fear," urged the petitioners, "that they will prove the forerunners of our ruin, except Almighty God, by the wisdom and care of this Parliament, be pleased to succour us, our husbands and children, which are as dear and tender to us as the lives

and blood of our hearts; to see them murdered and mangled and cut in pieces before our eyes; to see our children dashed against the stones, and the mothers' milk mingled with the infants' blood, running down the streets; to see our houses on flaming fire over our heads. . . . Thousands of our friends have been compelled to fly from episcopal persecutions into desert places among wild beasts."

After further denunciations of the Papists, the petitioners proceed—

"The remembrance of all these fearful accidents do strongly move us, from the example of the Women of Tekoah, to fall submissively at the feet of his Majesty our dread Sovereign, and cry, 'Help, O King! Help ye the noble worthies now sitting in Parliament.'"

It seems unnecessary to apologize for presenting such a memorial, but the petitioners thought otherwise, and gave as one of their reasons that "women are sharers in the calamities that accompany both Church and Commonwealth."

The petition was presented by Mrs. Anne Stagg, a brewer's wife, in company with others of similar rank.

Pym was chosen as spokesman by the Commons, and, going to the door of the House, addressed the petitioners—

"Good women, your Petition with the reasons hath been read in the House and is thankfully accepted of, and

is come in a seasonable time. You will, God willing, receive from us all the satisfaction which we can possibly give to your just and lawful desires. We intreat you, therefore, to repair to your houses and turn your petition which you have delivered here into prayers at home for us, for we have been and are and shall be, to our utmost power, ready to relieve you, your husbands and children, and to perform the trust committed unto us, towards God, our king and country, as becometh faithful Christian and loyal subjects."

Although there was no longer a king upon the throne, Pym speaks as if he still had a sovereign to whom he owed obedience.

A few years later, in October, 1651, the women are petitioning the government again, but with a very different object. It is a memorial to Cromwell against imprisonment for debt, a grievance not to be remedied for many a year. The petition sets forth—

"That the Norman yoke of bondage and oppression is still continued upon this nation by the impious, oppressive, delatory, and most chargeable practice of the law, and destructive imprisonment of men and women for debt in the several prisons, goals, counters, holes, and dungeons of cruelty in this land."

The petitioners complain that the Act for the relief of poor debtors is no benefit, and—

"that the present intricate, delatory, chargeable, oppressive,

endless practise of the Law, is become an abettor, encouragement and prop to all oppressors and defrauders, and an Egyptian reed and discouragement to most men, but in especial to all the poor who thereby are utterly disabled and disheartened from suing for their debts, rights, and inheritances, violently held from them by the rich and mighty. And if at any time (by the law) their debts and rights are seemingly recovered, yet then their able debtors have freedom (by the law and strength of their purses) to vacate judgements to arrest and imprison poor creditors upon false and strained actions (for many years) thereby enforcing some of them to compound with them at their own rates; others of them to perish miserably in goals, and so to lose both their debts and lives; whereby their wives and children are exposed to unexpressible misery; besides the many other unexpressible oppressions daylie practised by the rich and mighty on poor and simple hearted men and women in this land by sons of Belial."

Cromwell is exhorted to act as "a faithful Joshua with the zeal of Nehemiah," and the petition proceeds—

"The premisses piously considered, and for that the other weighty affairs of this land will not permit the speedy accomplishment of these particulars (by your Excellency) as your petitioners humbly conceive, in gaining a new representative; from which lawyers, and all ill-affected persons to be excluded. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that in the meantime there may be such a course established as that the poor may by some easie and speedy way reap the fruit of justice."

It has been said that "women have not suffycent understanding for to lerne the lawes;" but, as the old writer who commented on this statement observed, "the contrary is made open by experyence." Certainly the Puritan dames of the seventeenth century had "suffycent understanding" to realize the defects and hardships of the laws.

The fearful suffering caused to the inhabitants of the western counties after Monmouth's rebellion by that incarnation of cruelty, Judge Jeffreys, brought forth a women's petition of another kind. It is styled "The Humble Petition of the Widows and Fatherless Children in the West of England," and begins—

"We to the number of a thousand and more, widows and fatherless children, of the counties of Dorset, Somerset and Devon, our dear husbands and tender fathers having been so tyrannously butcher'd and some transported, our estates sold from us, and our inheritance cut off by the severe and harsh sentence of George Lord Jeffreys, now we understand in the Tower of London a prisoner, who has lately, we hear, endeavoured to excuse himself from those tyrannical and illegal sentences by laying it on information by some gentlemen who are known to us to be good Christians, true Protestants and Englishmen. We your poor petitioners, many hundreds of us, on our knees have begg'd mercy for our dear husbands and tender parents, from his cruel hands, but his thirst for

blood was so great and his barbarism so cruel that instead of granting mercy to some which were made to appear innocent and petitioned for by the flower of the gentry of the said counties, he immediately caus'd them to be executed. . . . These with many hundred more tyrannical acts are ready to be made appear in the said counties by honest and credible persons; and therefore your Petitioners desire that the said Lord Jeffreys, late Lord Chancellor, the vilest of men, may be brought down to the Counties aforesaid, where we the good women in the West, shall be glad to see him; and give him another manner of welcome than he had there years since." *

Hannah Hewling, who married Major Henry Cromwell, grandson of Oliver Cromwell, played a notable part during the terrible period following the Monmouth Rebellion. Both her brothers, Benjamin and William, were implicated and condemned to death. Hannah, who was at that time a young, unmarried girl, waylaid Judge Jeffreys in his coach, beseeching him to stay the sentence.

"The merciless judge, to make her let go, caus'd the coachman to cut her hands and fingers with the lash of his whip. Nor would he allow the respite of the execution but for two days, tho' the sister, with tears in her eyes, offered a hundred pounds for so small a favour."

Hannah also vainly interceded with the king, James II. Lord Churchill, by whom she was introduced, warned her of the king's obstinacy.

* "Western Martyrology."

"Madam," said he, "hearty as my wishes are that you may obtain what you want, I dare not flatter you with any such hope, for that marble (laying his hand on the chimneypiece at which he was standing) is as capable of feeling compassion as the King's heart."

After her marriage Hannah exercised a great deal of influence in the Cromwell family. She was of a strong Evangelical cast of mind and a Dissenter. Through her the Dowager Lady Cromwell was induced to substitute a Baptist minister for the Anglican clergyman she had been accustomed to have about her as chaplain.

Divers have been the parts which women of the middle classes have played in politics in days gone by. Even when it was a part involving a good deal of publicity they did not shrink, and their practical common sense was unclouded by any sentimental haze of doubt as to their "proper sphere." Everything that concerned their families or the commonweal they felt to be within their sphere, and they did not conceive the idea that politics were the concern of one sex alone. That complex creation of to-day, the "New Woman," to whom is ascribed, among other things, an unfeminine taste for politics, is not so modern after all. History is repeating itself, and the progenitors of the political woman are to be found far back in the days of the Lancastrians.

CHAPTER VII.

HEROINES OF THE CIVIL WAR.

Nature of the struggle—Position of Queen Henrietta Maria—Activity of women on both sides—Mrs. Hutchinson at Nottingham—Defence of Lathom House by the Countess of Derby—Lady Arundel at Wardour Castle—Lady Bankes besieged in Corfe Castle—Lady Lettice Digby defends Greashill Castle—Lady Fanshawe's visits to her husband in prison—Experiences of a gentlewoman in the West of England—Lady Musgrave and the Parliament—Lady Halkett assists the Duke of York to escape—Lady Rochester and the elections—The Jacobite rising—Flora McDonald.

THE great constitutional struggle of the seventeenth century was a struggle in which the whole nation was engaged. Every move on either side sent a thrill of hope or fear, of joy or indignation, throughout the kingdom. The brave defence of castle and home by the women, the patient endurance of hardship, the courage in presence of danger, the quick wit which could avert misfortune, make the Civil War of the seventeenth century peculiarly rich in striking incident. Every family of importance was ranged on one side or the other,

and many a one that could lay claim to no special distinction acquired fame during the struggle, while a fierce additional interest was lent by the religious element. All classes, in fact, were affected. None could stand aloof. The civil war became not only a national but also a domestic question, a matter of the deepest personal concern to hundreds who had no interest in statecraft. It was remarkable for the absence of any foreign element. The contest lay between King and people, or rather between royal prerogative and the liberty of the subject. The Queen herself, Henrietta of Nance, though as a Roman Catholic she was the source of contention, played but an insignificant part in the war. She had not the spirit of Margaret of Anjou, and, on account of her alien creed, commanded the sympathies of neither side. The Queen never formed a party strong enough to change the current of events. She was one of the *dramatis personæ* in the great tragedy, but not a leading actor. It was a people's war. The influence of foreign allies, the factions of court favourites, were as nothing. In former periods when civil war had raged, the flame had been kindled and fed by disputes for power among sovereigns and princes; the struggle had always assumed something of an imperial character. In the seventeenth century it was a purely internal

dissension. Hence the overwhelming interest felt in the struggle by both women as well as men, of all classes.

Women both on the Royalist and the Puritan side were in the thick of the fray, sometimes actually taking part in the fight, as in the case of the Countess of Derby, whose defence of Lathom House against the Parliamentarians is among the most noted incidents of the war; or like Lucy Hutchinson, playing an equally important *rôle* in attending to the wounded. Mrs. Hutchinson, strong Puritan as she was, regarded Cromwell as a usurper and a despot, though she admitted his greatness, and his family excited her scorn and derision.

"His wife and children were setting up for principality which suited no better with any of them than scarlet on the ape; only to speak the truth of himself, he had much natural greatness and well became the place he had usurped."

Lucy Hutchinson's father, Sir Allen Aspley, was governor of the Tower during the time of Sir Walter Raleigh's imprisonment. Her mother was in the habit of visiting Sir Walter, and helping him with the chemical experiments with which he wiled away the hours when not engaged in writing his "History of the World." It has been suggested that Mrs. Hutchinson obtained from her mother some knowledge of the properties of medicine, for

during the siege of Nottingham she proved most helpful in dressing the soldiers' wounds, and her plasters and balsams were found most efficacious even in dangerous cases. Mrs. Hutchinson was not the only member of her sex who proved herself able and ready for action in the city of Nottingham. After the siege was practically over, and the royalist forces had departed, the town was constantly being fired. Thereupon the women banded themselves together, and in parties of fifty patrolled the streets every night.

Mrs. Hutchinson was of great service, at the beginning of 1660, in assisting to quell the disturbances which arose over the elections. There was a strong party in the city for the King, and much ill feeling aroused between the townsmen and the soldiers of the Commonwealth. Just as matters were coming to a crisis and the soldiers were preparing to take vengeance on the citizens, Mrs. Hutchinson opportunely arrived—

"and being acquainted with the captaines perswaded them to doe nothing in a tumultuary way, however provok'd, but to complain to the generall, and lett him decide the businesse. The men, att her entreaty, were content so to doe, the townsmen alsoe consenting to restreine their children and servants and keepe the publick peace."

It was in the year 1643 that the Countess of

Derby began her memorable defence of Lathom House. The Countess was a Frenchwoman, a daughter of the Duc de Tremouille, and a descendant of Count William of Nassau. Negotiations began in May with a summons from Mr. Holland, Governor of Manchester, to Lady Derby to subscribe to the propositions of the Parliament or yield up Lathom House. The Earl was then away, fighting for the King. Her ladyship refused either to subscribe or to give up her house.

"From this time she endured a continual siege, being, with the exception of the gardens and walks, confined as a prisoner within her own walls, with the liberty of the castle-yard, suffering the sequestration of the whole estate, besides daily affronts and indignities from unworthy persons."

The Countess was very circumspect, putting a restraint upon her soldiers, and giving no provocation to her foes, "and so by her wisdom kept them at a more favourable distance for the space of almost a whole year."

In the following February Sir Thomas Fairfax wrote demanding surrender, to which the Countess replied that—

"she much wondered that Sir Thomas Fairfax should require her to give up her lord's house without any offence on her part done to the Parliament, desiring that in a business of such weight which struck both at her religion

and at her life, and that so nearly concerned her sovereign, her lord, and her whole posterity, she might have a week's consideration."

The Parliamentarian general then proposed a conference at a house about a quarter of a mile distant from Lathom House, but the Countess refused with dignity, saying she conceived it "more knightly that Sir Thomas Fairfax should wait upon her than she upon him." After further parleyings with Parliamentarians, she finally sent the following spirited message :—

"That she refused all their articles, and was truly happy that they had refused hers, protesting she had rather hazard her life than offer the like again. That though a woman and a stranger, divorced from her friends and robbed of her estate, she was ready to receive their utmost violence, trusting in God both for protection and deliverance."

The siege thereupon commenced, and was carried on in a desultory fashion by Sir Thomas Fairfax, who, after six or seven weeks, resigned his post to Colonel Rigby of Preston. The Countess commanded her troops, numbering three hundred soldiers, in person. The besiegers amounted to between two and three thousand men, of whom they lost five hundred, while the Countess lost only six during the whole period, two of those being killed by their own negligence.

After manufacturing a number of grenadoes, the Colonel sent a very peremptory message to the Countess demanding that Lathom House should be surrendered. Lady Derby received the message surrounded by her troops. She tore up the paper, and, turning to the messenger, said—

"Tell that insolent rebel [Rigby] he shall neither have person, goods, nor house; when our strength of provisions are spent, we shall find a fire more merciful than Rigby's, and then, if the providence of God prevent it not, my goods and house shall burn in his sight; and myself, children, and soldiers, rather than fall into his hands, will seal our religion and loyalty in the same flame."

The Countess followed up her words with deeds, and at four o'clock the next morning caused a sally to be made, whereby her soldiers got possession of the ditch and rampart, and of a very destructive mortar piece which had been pouring forth grenadoes from its mouth on to the besieged. Rigby wrote to the deputy-lieutenants of Lancashire begging for assistance. "The length of the siege," he complained, "and the hard duties have wearied all soldiers." As for himself, he says, "I almost languish under the burden, having toiled above my strength." However, nobody had time to attend to Rigby's complaints, and after a few more weeks he raised the siege. Help was now coming

to the beleaguered garrison. The Earl of Derby and Prince Rupert were on their way, and Rigby, in his endeavours to escape the Royalist forces, was surprised and badly beaten just as he had reached the town of Bolton.

"In this memorable action the Countess was amply revenged. The Earl of Derby took the first colour that fell before the Royalists, and with his own hand cut down a man who had once been his servant, but who had deserted with the intention of betraying his mistress in the time of her greatest peril."

Another memorable siege in 1643 was that of Wardour Castle in Wiltshire, the family seat of Lord Arundel. The Parliamentarians seized the opportunity when Lord Arundel was engaged in the king's service at Oxford to besiege the castle. They came with a supposed warrant to seize certain plate, money, and arms. Lady Blanche Arundel, though she had only a handful of men—twenty-five, it is said—to oppose the thirteen hundred soldiers mustered under Sir Edward Hungerford and Colonel Strode, bravely refused to yield to the demand that she should surrender the castle, saying "she had a command from her lord to keep it, and she would obey his command." Cannon were brought up within musket-shot, and the battery continued from Wednesday to the following Monday.

Two mines were sprung in a vault through which food was conveyed. One of these mines, being connected by passages with several parts of the castle, did much damage.

Sir Edward Hungerford again and again offered to grant quarter to the women and children if the castle were surrendered, but the offer was contemptuously refused, the women bravely resolving to die beside the men rather than live on dishonourable terms. The female servants were very useful in reloading muskets and bringing food to the soldiers.

But at length the besieged became worn out with the strain. Food was short, and they got no rest night or day. The soldiers were so faint and weary they could scarcely wield their arms.

"It might have been a doubt which they would have first loaded their muskets withal, either powder before bullet or bullet before powder, had not the maid servants (valiant beyond their sex) assisted them and done that service for them. Lastly, now when the rebels had brought petarrs and applied them to the garden door (which if forced opened a free passage into the castle), and balls of wild fire to show in at their windows, and all hope of keeping the castle was taken away; now, and not till now, did the besieged sound a parley."

This was after the siege had lasted nine days. Five van-loads of costly furniture were carried off by

the Parliamentarians, who plundered and destroyed as much as £100,000 worth of property. The women and children were carried off prisoners to Shaftesbury.

Corfe Castle, Dorsetshire, was bravely held for the Royalists in 1643 by Lady Mary Bankes, wife of the Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, "to her eternall honour be it spoken, with her daughters, women and five soldiers." Being so short of men and arms, the besieged had recourse to stones and hot embers. These missiles they cast over the walls, which the foe were attempting to scale, and greatly diminished the strength of the attack. The siege lasted six weeks, and the leader of the Parliamentarian army was so dispirited that when the news arrived that a party of Royalists were advancing to relieve the castle, he took flight. The next in command, not being disposed to try conclusions with a fresh force, did not even wait to collect his artillery and ammunition, but slipped away at night in a boat. Among other booty he left behind about a hundred horses.

A distinguished Irish lady, Lettice Digby, Baroness of Offaley, displayed marvellous courage during the troubles of 1641, when the Irish rebels stormed her castle of Greashill, in King's County. Although she was upwards of sixty years of age,

she undertook the defence of her home with great vigour. The castle stood in the midst of bogs and woods, and Lady Lettice, relying on the security of her position, closed the gates and refused to listen to any terms for surrender. She was at length relieved by Viscount Lisle and Sir Charles Cook, and, having been supplied with food and firearms, she resolved not to leave the castle, but to take the risk of another assault. This occurred soon after, and on this second occasion Sir Richard Grenville came to her aid. Apparently this valorous lady was then induced to change her quarters. She died in 1658, at Cobs Hill, Warwickshire, one of her estates.

Lady Fanshawe, whose father was an ardent Royalist, endured a good deal both before and after her marriage, which took place in 1644. Sir Richard Fanshawe, who was a connection on her mother's side, held the post of Secretary of War to the Prince of Wales, and was taken prisoner at the battle of Worcester.

"During the time of his imprisonment," writes Lady Fanshawe in the "Memoirs" she compiled for her children, "I failed not constantly to go when the clock struck four in the morning, with a dark lantern in my hand, all alone and on foot, from my lodgings in Chancery-lane, at my cousin Youngs, to Whitehall, in at the entry that

went out of King-street into the Bowling-green. There I would go under his window and softly call him; he, after the first time excepted, never failed to put out his head at the first call: thus we talked together, and sometimes I was so wet with the rain that it went in at my neck and out at my heels. He directed me how I should make my addresses, which I did ever to their General Cromwell, who had a great respect for your father, and would have bought him off to his service upon any terms."

After great exertions, she succeeded in getting her husband released on bail.

While in Ireland Lady Fanshawe displayed great courage. She was in Cork with her children, her husband being engaged elsewhere, during the revolt of 1649. The city was in the hands of Cromwell's army, but "through thousands of naked swords" she conveyed her children and her maids to a place of safety.

During the war women as well as men were called upon to contribute money and arms to the Commonwealth. A letter from Cromwell himself was addressed from Huntingdon, August 2, 1643, "to the Bachelors and Maids."

"I understand," he wrote, "by these gentlemen, the good affection of your young men and maids, for which God is to be praised. I approve of the business, only I desire to advise you that your foot company may be turned into a troop of horse, which indeed will (by God's

blessing) far more advantage the cause than two or three companies of foot, especially if your men be honest, godly men, which by all means I desire. I thank God for stirring up the youth to cast in their mite, which I desire may be employed to the best advantage; therefore my advice is, that you would employ your twelve-score pounds to buy my pistols and saddles, and I will provide four-score horses; for £400 more will not raise a troop of horse."

A typical instance of the straits to which gentlewomen were reduced, and the hardships and injuries which they suffered, may be found in the case of Mistress Joyce Jefferies, a maiden lady of good birth and some fortune, living on her own property in the thoroughly Royalist city of Hereford, which went through many vicissitudes during the Civil War. In 1638 Mistress Jefferies was called upon for ship money. This she paid, and also provided one soldier in respect of her farm and one for her other property in Hereford when the Trained Bands were called out. The ancestral armour which hung rusting on her walls she had taken down and cleaned ready for use. Up to the year 1642 Mistress Jefferies was able to remain unmolested in her own house, but in September of that year the Earl of Essex was advancing rapidly westward and took possession of the city of Worcester. It was felt that Hereford was no longer a safe place for Royalists, so, packing up some

furniture and clothes, Mistress Jefferies got into her carriage and drove away.

"I came," she writes in her diary or account-book, "to Kilkinton, to my cosin penreeses house from heriford for feare of ye parliaments army, September 23^{d}, 1642. The 27 I came from thence to Mr. Geeres at Garnons."

She contrived to have some of her possessions sent after her, for there are records of payment to different carriers—

"Paid Edward Parsons of heryford for helpping to carry my goods out of my howse in heriford to the cart that brought hit to Kilkinton, for feare of ye coming of ye parliaments army from Worcester to heriford 1^{s}. Gave another man for helpping in the same work 3^{d}. Paid Edward Stefens, Carier, for cariing a way my trunks and boxes and bedding from heriford to Kilkinton 25^{s}."

She saved some things by hiding them in the coal cellar, for she notes down that she paid fourpence to a "carpinder to pass my standard powles in ye cole house when the souldiers would had them barricade Widmarsh Gate." She did not get away much too soon, for she writes—

"Friday the 30. The Parliaments Army cam to herifford frõ Worster, Henry Gray, Earle of Stamford, ye Generall. On Tewsday morning October 4 captain Hamon and his barons company plundered Mr. Geereses house at Garnons, both them and me of much Goods, toke a way my 2 bay coache mares and som money, and

much Linen: and Elyza Acton's clothes. I cam frō Garnons ye same Tewsday to Mr. John Garpinder's to Hinton, a mile off, and staied there till the 14 of December following."

From place to place this good lady went seeking safety. She was reduced to having her clothes hidden in different places.

"January 7 feare of ye plunderers gave goody Lawrence for keeping clothes of myne and Eliza Actons (a young lady who lived with her) in ye hill for feare 1^{s}."

When she could not save her apparel from falling into the enemy's hands, she managed sometimes to redeem it, as in the following case:—

"Paid Mathias Rafford wch he laid out to redeeme my 2 black bever Hatts, and 2 gould bands out of ye theefes or plunderers hand, they took at Garnons 21/6."

Soldiers had meantime been quartered in her house in Hereford, where she had left her maid-servants, and whither Miss Eliza Acton seems to have gone from time to time to keep things in order. When the Royalists triumphed and established a garrison in the city, Mistress Jefferies paid her quota for the support of the soldiers. She was one of the richest householders in the city. The victory of the Royalists was short-lived, for in 1643 Hereford was again besieged by the

Parliamentary forces. So things went on for a couple of years, and Mistress Jefferies had to consent to see her comfortable house in the outskirts of the city razed to the ground to make room for military operations when another siege was expected. Far from grumbling at her own misfortunes, she was always ready to lend a helping hand to her neighbours. The income derived from her estates was seized by those other "plunderers," the Parliamentary Committee, who doled out to her some portion of her own property, imposing fines simply because she was a Royalist.

A distant relative of Mistress Jefferies was reduced to the most abject poverty during this period. This was a Mrs. Conyngesby, whose husband was sheriff of the county of Hereford, and also the owner of Hampton Court. Before the war broke out he had been burdened with debts, and during the early years of the Commonwealth, while he was absent from England, his family were reduced almost to beggary. Mrs. Conyngesby was constantly besieging the authorities who received petitions in Goldsmiths' Hall, begging for one-fifth part of her husband's estates, for her children were wanting food. These kinds of petitions were continually pouring in at Goldsmiths' Hall, and though orders were given for money to be paid, much laxity

was shown in the execution, and the wretched petitioners were kept for weary months in suspense and privation, and deemed themselves fortunate if they secured anything from the general wreck.

A foremost figure in the troubles going on in Ireland while war was raging in England was Lady Ranelagh, daughter of the first Earl of Cork. Through her persuasions her husband was induced to change sides and come over from the King to the Parliament. He became a genuine supporter of Cromwell, giving up to the common cause five castles, and also aiding the Parliamentary forces with men and arms. His family were, in consequence, reduced to great straits, and in 1646 Lady Ranelagh petitioned Parliament for some support. The sum of £6 a-week was allowed her for four years, and after this she had £4 a-week up to 1653. In spite of her anti-Stuart feelings, she was a good friend to those of the other side who were in distress. The eldest son of Lord Clarendon, who, after the Revolution, was involved in a plot for the restoration of James II., owed much to her good offices, as did also the second son who proclaimed himself in favour of the hereditary line of sovereigns, and was in danger of losing his government pension. Through Lady Ranelagh's friendship with Bishop Burnet, who used his good offices with the Queen,

the offence was passed over. Lady Ranelagh, on the other hand, made efforts to save the life of Lord William Russell, and tried to help those persecuted for religion like William Riffin, who was arrested by order of the Duke of Buckingham for preaching in a Baptist chapel.

It will be seen how frequently women were called upon to take a personal and decisive part in the great struggle of the seventeenth century.

"There was no security against the lawlessness of the soldiery, who availed themselves (on both sides) of the slightest pretext for entering private houses, and plundering and menacing the inhabitants. A suspicion of disaffection either way, or the possession of arms or gunpowder, was excuse enough for violence and rapine. Unprotected widows, or ladies left in charge of mansions and domains while their husbands were out levying troops, offered irresistible temptation to the scattered parties of half-fed troops that went marauding hungrily over the country." *

Two sisters wrote the following appeal to General Fairfax:—

"May it please your Excellency to vouchsafe me and my sister Ann your honourable favour and protection for our goods, and that we may not suffer though my brother hath broke his promise with your lordship; which I vow my Lord, I was altogether ignorant of, and it grieves me infinitely; for that we have ever found your lordship so noble a friend to our house. Therefore I beseech your

* Robert Bell, "Memorials of the Civil War."

lordship to commiserate our cases who are left orphans, and for my dear deceased father's sake, who loved and honoured your lordship truly, let us not, who are innocent, suffer; but that your wonted goodness and favour may still reflect and shine upon us, by which you shall oblige us ever to remain my Lord,

"Your lordship's most humble servants,

"MARY MIDDLETON,

"ANN MIDDLETON."

The Parliament were very much afraid of the leading women in the Royalist party, and to undermine their influence and prevent communication, orders were given that certain ladies should be removed from their homes. Colonel Chomeley was directed particularly to get Lady Musgrave out of the way. A letter was sent from William Roe, Secretary to the Commissioners, dated from Newcastle, April 12, 1645—

"Whereas we are informed that the wives of sundry of our enemies in Carlisle are remaining at their own houses in Cumberland and Westmoreland, from whence they may give intelligence of all that passeth amongst yourselves, and are ready to stir the vil humours and to improve all discontents, to the raising up of tumults, and bringing in confusion with the people and inhabitants their neighbours, round about them: we think fit and hereby order that Colonel Chomeley shall take care to apprehend all such persons as he may have just cause to suspect to be stirrers up of sedition and insurrection; that in particular he would

repair to the Lady Musgrave at Eden Hall, and conduct her to Carlisle, where she may remain with her husband, Sir Philip Musgrave, in more security than in her house at Eden Hall, in these tumultuous and troublesome times; and of this service we expect an account as speedily as may be."

Lady Musgrave, whose husband, Sir Philip Musgrave, was a staunch Royalist, addressed the following remonstrance to Lord Fairfax:—

"I have formerly received your lordship's protection for my remaining at Eden Hall, if I be obedient to ordinance of Parliament, which they cannot tax me, for my accusation is suspicion of intelligence, without desert or proof. Colonel Chomeley hath orders for my removing. I did desire the stay of us till I knew your honour's pleasure. Eden Hall is my jointure, where my humble suit is to remain, being very unfit for travel. But I wholly refer myself to your lordship's pleasure, both for means, and what place I and my children may remain together at, presuming that your honourable favour and worth will consider my poor condition, which shall ever oblige me to be,

"Your most obedient servant,

"JULIAN MUSGRAVE."

Another instance of the prominent part which women were compelled to take in the stormy politics of the seventeenth century, may be found in the life of Lady Anne Halkett, the daughter of

Thomas Murray, who was Secretary to Charles I. when Prince of Wales. It was Mistress Anne who, at the request of Colonel Bamfield, assisted the Duke of York to escape from St. James's Palace. She caused a female costume to be made for the duke by her own tailor, having first procured the necessary measurements from Colonel Bamfield. There was a little awkwardness about this initial proceeding, for the tailor much wondered at the directions given him.

"When I gave the measure to my tailor to inquire how much mohaire would serve to make a petticoate and wastcoate to a young gentlewoman of that bignesse and stature, hee considered itt a long time, and said hee had many gownes and suites, butt hee had never made any to such a person in his life. I thought hee was in the right, butt his meaning was, hee had never seene any woman of so lowe a stature have so big a waste; however hee made itt as exactly fitt as if hee had taken the measure himselfe. It was a mixed mohaire of a light haire colour and blacke, and ye under petticoate was scarlett."

It was arranged that the duke should make his escape on the evening of April 20, 1648. The duke was accustomed to play at hide and seek with his attendants after supper, and this game was employed to cover his flight. Colonel Bamfield waited at the garden gate of the palace, and conveyed the duke to a house that he had hired, where

the costume was in readiness, and Mistress Anne and another were waiting in great anxiety.

"I had many feares," she writes, "for Colonel Bamfield had desired me, if they came nott there precisely by ten a'clocke, to shift for myselfe, for then I might conclude they were discovered, and soe my stay there could doe no good, but prejudice my selfe. Yett this did nott make me leave the howse, though ten a'clocke did strike, and hee that was intrusted offten wentt to the landing place, and saw no boate comming was much discouraged, and asked mee what I would doe. I told him I came there with a resolution to save his Highnesse, and I was fully determined nott to leave that place till I was outt of hopes of doing what I came there for, and would take my hazard. Hee left me to go againe to ye watter-side, and heard a great noise of many as I thought comming up staires, which I expected to be soldiers to take mee, but it was a pleasing disapointmentt, for ye first that came in was ye Duke, who with much joy I took in my armes and gave God thankes for his safe arrivall. His Highnese called 'Quickely, quickely, dress me,' and putting off his cloaths I dressed him in the women's habitt that was prepared, which fitted his Highnese very well, and was pretty in itt. After hee had eaten something I made ready while I was idle lest his Highnese should be hungry, and having sent for a Woodstreet cake (which I knew he loved) to take in the barge, with as much hast as could bee his Highnese wentt crose the bridge to ye stairs where the large barge lay, Colonel Bamfield leading him; and immediately the boatmen plied the oare so well that they weare soone out of sight, having both wind and tyde with ym."

The duke was not missed at first, his attendants supposing he had found some secure hiding-place. But as time sped on a thorough search was made, and the Earl of Northumberland, who had charge of the duke, sent to acquaint the Speaker of the House of Commons. Orders were given to stop and search all ships leaving the Cinque Ports, but the clerks employed to write the instructions were slow in making out the papers.

"None of them were able to writt one right, butt ten or twelve of y^{m} were cast by before one was according to their mind."

So the orders arrived too late.

In 1653 Mistress Anne Murray, while staying in Edinburgh, rendered an important service to the Earl of Balcarres, who was in danger of arrest. She undertook to warn him, and started early in the morning attended by a man-servant, reaching the Earl's residence before ten o'clock. Lord and Lady Balcarres immediately left the house, and at their request Mistress Murray stayed with the children and packed up the books in trunks, for the Earl had a very fine library.

"I was very desirous," she writes, "to serve them faithfully in what I was intrusted, and as soone as my Lord and Lady were gone, I made locke up the gates, and with ye helpe of Logan who served my Lord, and one of ye

women, both beeing very trusty, I tooke downe all ye bookes, and putting them in trunkes and chests, sentt them all outt of the house in the night to the places appointed by my Lord, taking a short way of inventory to know what sort of bookes were sentt to every person. . . . The things had nott been two houres outt of the house when the troope of horse came and asked for my Lord. . . . They searched all the house, and seeing nothing in itt butt bare walls and weemen and children, they wentt away."

Just before the Restoration, in February, 1660, when Monk caused the secluded members to be re-admitted to what was called a Free Parliament, there was great excitement among the country gentlemen. One of the most notable politicians was Lady Rochester, whose son, Sir Henry Lee, was a candidate. She writes to her friend Mr. Thomas Yates, on February 23—

"This day I received a letter from you with all the good newes in it, for which I give you thanks, and also for the care you tell me you have taken for my sonne Lee's being chosen a Parliament man in the next election. I was formerly spoken to for Mr. Appletree, whome I must now lay absolutely aside by reason that Sir Ralphe Verney desires to bee one, who is a person whose owne merits is such, as it will bee a happinesse to the place, and they will have cause to give us thanks for him; besides, you know his relation to the childrens businesse obleiges me to doe him any service hee shall comand; if there should be noe oath imposed nor engagement, Sir Ralphe

will accept of it himselfe, and if there should be any reason to divest him I shall desire it for his sonne. Good Mr. Yates, next to my sonne Lee, let not Sir Ralphe Verney faile of being chosen. What you shall say to the people of the place to encourage them to it, I shall leave to your prudence, depending uppon your descreation in presenting his merrits, and truly it will bee much to my satisfaction to serve him in this, and it will bee very kindly taken from you by her that is ye

"Your friend and servant,

"ANNE ROCHESTER."

Lady Rochester was a person of influence, and was besieged by applications for help. A little later she writes again—

"Here is such a doe about providing for burgeses place the nex perlement, I have ben soe trobeled with Solicitors for those places in the children's estate that it has bin very trobelsome too mee, but I put them all off with telling them that I am already promised as far as my interest goes; I hope that Yates wil be carefull in securing a place for you and my sonne Lee, and those will bee as many as wee can compas. The town of Mamsbery sent too my sonne Lee that if hee would come in person they did hope too chuse him, though there were at least thirteine that did sue to bee choose in that towne, soe my sonne meanes too goe thether at the election for feare of the worst. Sir, if therebe anything wherein I may serve you more then I doe yet understand, bee pleased to command her that is your friend and servant

"ANNE ROCHESTER."

Turning from England to Scotland, we find women playing a notable part at a later period, when the House of Stuart again involved the country in civil war. The Jacobites kept up a political ferment from the time when James II. was impelled to lay down his crown and fly, to the death of his grandson Prince Charlie. The Young Pretender, who has been variously described as the pink of chivalry and a worthless debauchee, was the object of a very real and practical enthusiasm. In Scotland, ladies of rank and wealth enlisted eagerly in his cause. There is very little that is admirable in such partisans of Prince Charlie as Lady Ogilvie and the Duchess of Perth beyond their dauntless courage. But if half the men who flocked to the Young Pretender's standard had been filled with the fiery spirit of those two notorious Scotch-women, the course of political events would have been altered. As it was, they materially influenced the action of the leaders of the rebel party. Had it not been for the Duchess, the Duke of Perth would have been but a lukewarm adherent, and certainly would never have bestirred himself to raise a troop for the Prince on his own estate. But the Duchess shamed him into action. She herself went about for three days and nights collecting recruits, and when she had mustered seven

hundred and fifty, she caused the Chevalier, as he was called, to be proclaimed by sound of bagpipes and hunting-horns from the walls of Castle Drummond. She accompanied the Scotch army to England, and when the expected reinforcements failed to appear at Carlisle, she told the hesitating Duke that if he turned back she would lead the men herself. She had not only to overcome her husband's timidity, but to contend with the weakness of the Prince. When he talked of a retreat at Derby, she expressed her disgust in no measured terms, and gave him clearly to understand that she thought him a coward.

"If," said the indignant lady, "I had as many women in my train as the Prince has men in his, I would not turn my back upon all the power the enemy could bring up."

Much against her will, she was forced into the rear at the battle of Culloden, and was ultimately taken prisoner.

Her friend, Lady Ogilvie, was likewise always to be found wherever fighting was going on. She was present at the battle of Falkirk and at the siege of Stirling; but, unfortunately, her ferocity of temper marred the excellence of her courage. Her political foes were enemies for whom no measure of retaliation was too harsh. Lady Ogilvie,

like the Duchess of Perth, was taken prisoner after Culloden, though she was not present at the battle.

But the heroine of the Jacobite rising was the famous Flora McDonald. The gentle but high-spirited girl, whose name has become a household word, was far from being a politician. When the Prince of Wales visited her in London after her release from the Tower, she said very frankly that she only acted towards Prince Charlie as she would have acted towards his Royal Highness himself had their positions been reversed. Womanly compassion moved her to imperil her life and the prospects of her family to relieve the distresses of a fugitive prince. At the same time she shared the enthusiasm of her country for the house of Stuart. The romantic story of her journey with Prince Charlie attired as her Irish maid-servant has been fully told in other pages.* Her want of precaution in not stopping the mouths of the boatmen led to her arrest. Two weary months she spent in prison in Scotland, and was then conveyed to London and confined in the Tower. From this ominous fortress she was removed and placed in charge of a private family, where the Prince of Wales made his totally unexpected visit. Her candour so impressed him that he advised

* "Autobiography of Flora McDonald."

she should be restored to her friends. A free pardon was sent her, and Flora McDonald became the lioness of the London season. To the young Scotch gentlewoman, unaccustomed to the turmoil of fashionable life, and loving the freedom and solitude of the moors, London society soon became oppressive. She writes—

"To be in the fashion in London, the people appeared to me to live more out of their houses than in them; in the afternoon visiting, driving in their family coaches, attending sale-rooms where trumpery articles were sold by auction to the highest bidder, sometimes really scarcely worth taking home; for the principal part of the amusement consisted in the ladies outbidding each other, and generally amongst friends, so that large sums of money used to change hands in this frivolous way, which, no doubt, made their husbands very cross. However, the town ladies would, and I suppose ever will, contrive to have their own way. Then came the formal dinner-parties—oh, how I used to yawn behind my fan!—and often we went to see the play in Drury Lane, and, if it chanced to be a mournful tragedy, I could not help being so silly as to cry, it all seemed so natural and life-like. The best actor was Mr. Garrick, and he certainly was a great man in his profession. Mr. Cibber also was wonderfully clever: these were the first stage performers at that time. . . ."

She goes on to describe how soon she tired of the constant whirl of London fashionable life,

out all day driving from house to house, and every night at some place.

"I was sick," she declares, "of the compliments paid me; indeed, in many cases the attentions of the gentlemen went beyond compliments."

Presently this brilliant figure disappears from English society, and the heroine returns to her native land to marry her kinsman, Allan McDonald, and to become the mother of the celebrated Sir John McDonald.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MARTYR PERIODS: RELIGIOUS ZEAL AND RELIGIOUS APATHY.

Religious life in the sixteenth century—Religion the great motive-power—The Lollard persecutions—Protestant martyrs of the sixteenth century—Anne Askew—Women martyrs in the seventeenth century — Persecution of the Quakeresses — Quaker doctrines—Seventeenth-century Anglicanism—Indifference of the Church to social work—Condition of the clergy—Mary Astell and her Protestant nunnery—The Countess of Warwick.

THE religious history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is notorious for comprising two great periods of martyrdom—periods which are significant as showing the strong latent force in women, waiting for opportunity to call it forth. Whatever position may be assigned to women either by the Church or the State, whatever may have been the current notions about the place they should occupy, however much they may have been repressed or neglected, they have always been ready, when occasion arose, to respond to the call for action. In times of political struggle,

of fierce fighting, they have been eager to spend and be spent, enthusiastic, persistent, unflinching. In the cause of religion, which, above all others, appeals to women, their zeal has been most conspicuous.

It has been elsewhere noted that throughout the Middle Ages the Church was the dominant force.* All over Europe the unity of Christendom was the central idea, binding men together in spite of the rents caused by war. In the sixteenth century this idea was overthrown. Christendom was divided, never again to be welded into one. Yet the unloosening of the bonds which had held the laity in subjection to ecclesiastical authority, did not subvert the influence of religion itself among the people. As an interest religion occupied a large place in the lives of all classes. Those who had leisure used it for the study of theology and religious literature; among women the literary efforts of that period were chiefly concerned with devotional matters. Liberty awakened an ardour more intense. A new power was given to the people—the right of private judgment. It brought with it an overwhelming sense of responsibility. Questions that had before been decided by an infallible authority were left to be solved by each

* Chapter VI.

one for himself. Religion became for the first time a matter dependent on personal conviction and understanding. The priest no longer stood as interpreter between the individual and his faith.

All the influences of the period, the literary movement, the awakening forces of the Renaissance, the stress and stir in the whole national life, added to rather than diminished the strength of the religious emotion. It might have been supposed that people would have been lax and indifferent in a period of so much general activity, when new vistas were opening out in the social horizon. But the sixteenth century was not a time of apathy in any department of life, and the religious question which was agitating the whole Continent burned fiercer than ever in England on account of the increased mental activity.

With women who embraced the reformed faith, religion was the dominating force. All their enthusiasm awoke. To those with a strong spiritual bias the question of belief became the most supreme matter of concern. To be false to conscience was to poison the very root of their being. The Roman Catholic martyrs died loyally in the service of the Church—that Church which was tottering from blows without and corruption within—they died as servants of a spiritual power that had ruled Europe.

The glamour attaching to the traditions of a Church which had had no rival in Christendom hung round their faith. The Protestant martyrs died like soldiers in a cause which they had espoused from intense conviction of its rightness. They died exultingly for a belief which had become the mainspring of their lives, which was a personal possession, a deep spiritual experience. In these martyr periods we see the apotheosis of the religious sentiment in women.

The abnormal character of the martyr periods makes them stand out from the general course of history. They are not evolutionary, except in the sense in which all events spring from causes, and all phenomena, whether material or spiritual, are part of a chain of circumstances. In the attitude of the Church towards women during religious persecutions, there are no features which are not characteristic of the attitude of the Church to the general body of the laity. During these periods differences of sex are obliterated. The perfervid zeal and fanaticism which inspired to persecution suspended all ordinary relations.

It has also to be remembered that the martyr spirit was not the spirit of the general body of the people. The population was not divided into two parts, of which the larger were the persecuted and

the smaller the persecutors. The mass held a neutral position, and displayed neither heroism nor bloodthirstiness. The martyrs and zealots were few compared with those who escaped notice altogether.

The martyr periods certainly show what a much greater motive-power religion was than in more peaceful times, when other forces competed for mastery over the human mind; and they afford endless speculation to the student of mental and moral phenomena. As regards women, it is only in these times of religious upheaval that the Church recognized their perfect equality with men.

There is nothing in the history of the persecutions that applies more particularly to women than to men. Both suffered alike, and displayed what seems to those who live in an age when all religions are tolerated, a fanatical devotion to forms of faith as well as the loftiest courage and fortitude. The persecutors made no distinction of sex. A woman, by reason of being a heretic or a Papist, as the case might be, was at once elevated to a position of unenviable distinction. In ordinary times neither the Roman nor the Protestant Church recognized an equality of rights between men and women. The Romanists kept women in subjection, and curtailed their liberty of action and thought; the

Protestants checked their means of usefulness by neglect. But neither had power to damp religious zeal, and when the hour of peril came, women showed an unwavering spirit and a fearless independence.

It may also be noted, in passing, that while the Roman Church proclaimed the inferiority of women, and put a low value on their intellectual powers, it treated their deviations from its doctrine with the same rigour as if they had been endowed with the superior attributes of the other sex. Women's weakness, mental and moral, availed them nothing. They were subjected to interrogatories as searching and tortures as severe as men. No excuse was made for their want of reason and understanding, and the greatest pains were taken to convince them of error. During the Lollard persecutions in 1389, an anchoress known to be tainted with the new opinions was carried from Leicester to Wolverhampton, was closely immured and examined by no less a magnate than Courtney, Archbishop of Canterbury, who, either by threat or persuasion, prevailed upon this erring sister to recant her heresy.

In 1459 the monks of Bath were greatly excited by hearing that a woman, an inhabitant of the city, had spoken slightingly of the—

"holy mummeries that were carried on in the Church of Bath, and the pilgrimages made by the devotees to the different sacred edifices in the neighbourhood. This was wounding the monks in the tenderest part; and as the offence militated directly against their influence and interest, it demanded a severe and exemplary punishment. A proper representation of this heinous crime being made to the ecclesiastical court at Wells, it was decreed that she should recant in the great church at Bath, before all the congregation, the heretical and disrespectful words she had spoken against the superstitions of the latter city and some neighbouring places, which had been to this effect: that it was but waste to give to the Holy Trinity at Bath, and equally absurd to go on pilgrimages to St. Osmund at Salisbury; and that she wished the road thither was choaked up with (bremmel) brambles and thorns to (lette) prevent people from going thither." *

The questioning to which the Protestant martyrs of the sixteenth century were subjected was very minute. With a notable heretic like Anne Askew, who was burnt at Smithfield, July 16, 1546, the dignitaries of the Church spent hours of discussion day after day, and women who were of no renown whatever were cross-examined in much detail.

Among the Roman Catholics women of the trading class suffered persecution because they could not bring themselves to acquiesce in the new form of worship. The wife of a miller in All Hallows parish

* Rev. R. Warner, "Ecclesiastical History of Bath."

refused to go to church because, she said, there was "neither priest, altar, nor sacrifice;" and many women who showed a similar spirit may be found among the wives of tailors, locksmiths, tanners, and others of similar standing. Pressure was put upon tradesmen, yeomen, and husbandmen to ensure the conformity of their wives.

"The common people of England," it was said in derision, "were wiser than the wisest of the nation; for here the very women and shopkeepers were able to judge of predestination, and determine what laws were to be made concerning Church government."

Anne Askew was arrested in March, 1545, and brought before Christopher Dare at Sadlers' Hall, Cheapside, on the charge of denying transubstantiation, the eighteenth article of the statute. She was afterwards examined by the Lord Mayor, by the Bishop of London's chaplain, by Bishop Bonner, by Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and Lord Chancellor Wriothesley, none of whom could shake her convictions or induce her to retract, and she was accordingly burnt at the stake. Anne Askew was of good social position, the daughter of a knight, Sir William Askew, and a maid of honour to Queen Catherine Parr.

It was not only a rapt enthusiasm and ecstatic fervour which sustained women in the hour of

martyrdom. There is plenty of evidence of that comprehending courage which could anticipate and prepare for death with the same calmness as for any ordinary event of life. The dying speeches of the women who suffered from the merciless brutality of Judge Jeffreys are very remarkable. That of the aged Lady Alicia de Lisle, who was barbarously executed in 1685, after the battle of Sedgmoor, for sheltering fugitives, is one of the most notable—

"Gentlemen, Friends, and Neighbours, it may be expected that I should say something at my death, and in order thereunto I shall acquaint you that my birth and education were both near this place, and that my parents instructed me in the fear of God, and I now die of the Reformed Protestant Religion; believing that if ever popery should return into this nation, it would be a very great and severe judgment. . . . The crime that was laid to my charge was for entertaining a Nonconformist Minister and others in my house; the said minister being sworn to have been in the late Duke of Monmouth's Army.

* * * * *

"I have no excuse but surprise and fear, which I believe my Jury must make use of to excuse their verdict to the world. I have been also told that the Court did use to be of counsel for the prisoner; but instead of advice, I had evidence against me from thence; which, though it were only by hearing, might possibly affect my Jury; my defence being such as might be expected

from a weak woman; but, such as it was, I did not hear it repeated again to the Jury, which, as I have been informed, is usual in such cases. However, I forgive all the world, and therein all those that have done me wrong."

Another victim, Mrs. Gaunt of Wapping, who was burnt in the same year for a somewhat similar offence, wrote the day before her martyrdom—

"Not knowing whether I should be suffered or able because of weaknesses that are upon me through my hard and close imprisonment, to speak at the place of execution; I writ these few lines to signifie that I am well reconciled to the way of my God towards me, though it be in ways I looked not for, and by terrible things, yet in righteousness."

She goes on to write a long speech expressive of her religious faith and her entire lack of regret for anything that she had done in succouring the poor, ". . . I did but relieve an unworthy poor distressed family, and lo, I must die for it."

She puts a postscript: "Such as it is you have it from her who hath done as she could, and is sorry she can do no better."

The Quakers went through their period of martyrdom in the seventeenth century. In the midst of a heterogeneous state of religious parties, the Quaker movement stands out with great distinctness as the only religious movement in which

women were recognized as leaders and teachers. The Quakers began to preach in London about the year 1654, five years after George Fox's imprisonment. Both in England and in America, whither numbers emigrated, they endured violent persecution. The first Quakers who went to Boston were two women who sailed in 1656. They were imprisoned and maltreated, were deprived of food and light, had their books seized and burnt, and all sorts of indignities practised upon them. The reign of Charles II. was an exceedingly troublous time for Quakers in England, though they had been promised immunity from molestation in their meetings, both by General Monk and by Charles when he came to the throne. In the first year of the preaching in London two women, who undertook to distribute a pamphlet written by George Fox and called "The Kingdom of Heaven," were arrested and sent to Bridewell prison.

As their numbers increased, so did their troubles. Quakers have never been noted for active proselytizing, but their well-ordered lives made a greater impression than exhortation and argument.

"Thus continuing to live in fear and a reverential awe, they improved in true godliness; insomuch that by their pious lives they preached as well as others with words. After this manner the number of their

society increased: but then grievous sufferings ensued; for the priests could not endure to see that their hearers left them; the furious mob was spurred on, and among the magistrates there were many who, being of a fierce temper, used all their strength to root out the professors of the light (as they were called at first), and to suppress and stifle their doctrine; but all proved in vain, as appears abundantly from their history; although there were hardly any prisons in England where some of these people were not shut up; besides the spoil of goods and cruel whippings that befell some of them. Yet all this they bore with a more than ordinary courage without making resistance, how great soever their number was; and notwithstanding many of them had been valiant soldiers, who often had slain their enemies in the field without regarding danger."

That the women endured an abundant share of the persecutions and martyrdoms which befell the Society is proved by the records. They were scourged and ill treated in every possible way. Not only did they endure great suffering, but took active steps in trying to rescue their fellow-members from evil plight. When George Fox was apprehended, in 1660, at the house of one Margaret Fell, a widow of Judge Fell, at Swarthmore (Lancashire), his entertainer, accompanied by another Friend, Anne Curtis, procured an interview with the king. Anne Curtis gained the royal ear through being the daughter of a Bristol

sheriff who had been hanged for his devotion to the Stuarts.* Not much came of the interview, however, for, although the king was ready enough to listen, and gave an order for Fox to be brought up, it was evaded, and a delay of two months ensued.

Barbara Blangdon, who suffered persecution and imprisonment for her preaching in the west of England in 1654, made an effort, as soon as her own release was effected, to procure that of two other members at Basingstoke, and was successful, through her intercession with the mayor.

In 1656 two Quakeresses were placed in the stocks at Evesham by the mayor, with every circumstance of indignity, for visiting some prisoners. Two years before, the Oxford scholars so violently maltreated two Quakeresses who preached in the streets that one of them succumbed shortly after. With the end of the seventeenth century persecutions for the most part ceased, and a period of quiescence set in. There was a good deal of discussion going on in the eighteenth century anent Quakerism, and many satires and skits were issued against the sect, but it was a war of words only.

The Quakers always maintained the equality of

* Wm. Sewel, "History of the Society of Friends."

women with men in religious matters. It was one of the cardinal articles of their belief.

"As we dare not encourage any ministry but that which we believe to spring from the influence of the Holy Spirit, so neither dare we to attempt to restrain this ministry to persons of any condition in life, or to the male sex alone; but as male and female are one in Christ, we hold it proper that such of the female sex as we believe to be endued with a right qualification for the ministry should exercise their gifts for the general edification of the Church."

The first woman among the Quakers to preach in London was Ann Downer, afterwards married to George Whitehead. Private residences were frequently used as places of worship, and women are often mentioned as lending their houses for this purpose.

Women, being able to exercise the function of preaching, were naturally prominent in other departments of work.

"As we believe women may be rightly called to the work of the ministry," say the Friends, "we also think that to them belongs a share in the support of our Christian discipline: and that some parts of it, wherein their own sex is concerned, devolve on them with peculiar propriety. Accordingly they have monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings of their own sex, held at the same time with those of the men; but separately, and without the power of making rules; and it may be remarked that during the persecutions which formerly occasioned the imprisonment

of so many of the men, the care of the poor fell on to the women, and was by them satisfactorily administered."

They have always continued to maintain the right of women to become preachers, a right which seemed an exceedingly strange one, in the last century, to members of other religious bodies. The Quakers were quite aware of the weak points in their adversaries' armour, and quick to perceive the ground of the objection against their own broader view of the position of women.

"There is yet another strong prejudice against women's preaching," says one of the Quaker *Dissertations*, "and this no less than the united interest of the whole body of men called clergymen. For if, say they, the pastoral function may be exercised by laymen and even women, then we shall be deemed no longer necessary, nay, perhaps, down goes our trade, our pomp, and revenues. And, indeed, it is hardly credible to me that these men would have ever made the opposition that some of them have done to a woman's preaching Jesus in a sensible manner, if preaching were a profession which there was nothing to be got by."

The Anglican clergy of the seventeenth century bore a high character for learning. "The ordinary sort of our English clergy," wrote Eachard, "do far excel in learning the common priests of the Church of Rome." Atterbury is still more emphatic. He declares that "for depth of learning, as well as

other things, the English clergy is not to be paralleled in the whole Christian world." Yet Edward Chamberlayne* affirms that "they are less respected generally than any in Europe;" and both Bishop Burnet and Bishop Stillingfleet bewail the contempt with which the clergy were regarded as "too notorious not to be observed."

The Anglican Church did not leaven the nation as the Roman Church had done by works of charity and benevolence. It was remarkably indifferent to social work and religious propagandism, outside the doors of the church. The traditions of the Roman Church were not carried on by the Protestants, who probably felt a repugnance to any methods adopted by their enemies, the Papists.

"Not only were Anglicans destitute of any associations of lay helpers in Christian work at home, and of any means for carrying on missions abroad, but Puritans were in the same predicament." †

That there were many abuses connected with the old system of almsgiving at the convent gate cannot be doubted, and it was impossible, in a fast-growing nation, that such a state of things should continue; but the Anglican Church lost one of its great holds on the people by indifference to the

* "Angliæ Notitiæ."

† Stoughton, "Religion in England: The Church of the Revolution."

offices of charity. The State had begun, in a partial and imperfect way, in the sixteenth century, to assume the care of the poor. The beginnings of the old poor-law system may be traced to the reign of Elizabeth. But the State was a poor foster-mother. The Protestant Church made no organized effort to become to the masses what the Roman Church had been. It assumed none of that absolute authority combined with paternal care. It is true that the ideal set up by George Herbert of the country parson is that of a true father of his flock.

"He first considers his own parish; and takes care that there be not a beggar or idle person in his parish, but that all be in a competent way of getting their living. This he effects either by bounty or persuasion, or by authority; making use of that excellent Statute which binds all parishes to maintain their own. If his parish be rich, he exacts this of them; if poor, and he be able, he easeth them therein. But he gives no set pension to any."

There was little of what is now called Church work. And the clergy do not seem to have thought of enlisting the aid of women in the few tentative efforts put forth during the seventeenth century. It may be urged that the fault lay with the women, who did not come forward or show their willingness to co-operate. There was no encouragement for them to do so.

"The tendencies of the period were not favourable to the development of women's work in the Church. Nor was it the fashion for women to occupy a prominent position. Women played small part in the life of the nation at large. In none of the societies formed for missionary, devotional, or philanthropic objects did women take a leading part. The only attempt to form an organization of women was nipped in the bud."

This attempt refers, probably, to the effort made by Mrs. Mary Astell to set up a "Protestant Nunnery," of which further mention will be made.

There was, indeed, an establishment founded by a certain Nicholas Ferrar, some time in the first half of the century, at Little Gidding, in Huntingdonshire, which was called a Protestant nunnery. But it was little more than the setting up of the conventual rule in an ordinary household.

In 1642 Parliament seemed to think it necessary that something should be done to improve the religious life of the country, and accordingly, on April 7—

"the Lords and Commons doe declare that they intend a due and necessary reformation of the government and liturgie of the Church, and to take nothing away in the one or in the other, but what shall be evill or justly offensive, or at least unnecessary and burdensome. And for the better effecting thereof, speedily to have consultation with godly and learned divines; and because this will never of

itselfe attein the end sought therein, they will therefore use their utmost endevors to establish learned and preaching ministers with a good and sufficient maintenance throughout the whole kingdome, wherein many darke corners are miserablie destitute of the meanes of salvation, and many poore ministers want necessary provision." *

The saintly George Herbert, who lived through the first quarter of the seventeenth century, makes a mild protest against the cringing attitude adopted by that section of the clergy who took upon themselves the duties of domestic chaplain to wealthy families. In many, if not most, houses the chaplain was put on a par with the upper servants, and expected to show the same deference towards the employers.

"Those that live in noble houses," writes Herbert, "are called chaplains; whose duty and obligation being the same to the houses they live in as a parson's to his parish, in describing the one (which is indeed the bent of my discourse) the other will be manifest. Let not chaplains think themselves so free as many of them do; and because they have different names think their office different. Doubtless they are parsons of the families they live in, and are entertained to that end, either by an open or implicit covenant. Before they are in Orders they may be received for companions or discoursers; but after a man is once minister he cannot agree to come into any house where he shall not exercise what he is, unless he forsake

* "Diary of John Rous."

his plough and look back. Therefore they are not to be over-submissive and base, but to keep up with the lord and lady of the house, and to preserve a boldness with them and all, even so far as reproof to their very face when occasion calls, but seasonably and discreetly."

The subservience of the clergy as a class, and the slights put upon them, arose partly from their poverty, which was treated like a fault. In 1670, writes Eachard, £20 or £30 a-year was as much as hundreds of the clergy could obtain. In the beginning of the eighteenth century there were some benefices, says Henry Wharton, not above £5 a-year in value, some hundreds not over £20, and some thousands not more than £30. Dean Swift puts the average income of a vicar at £40.

Whether rightly or wrongly, the bulk of the clergy in the seventeenth century seem to have enjoyed little of the prestige attaching to the priestly office, and their social position showed some curious anomalies. It was not because they were out of harmony with the national life. The higher clergy who were in possession of fat livings were, naturally, on good terms with the world, and were quite in sympathy with the tastes and habits of their neighbours, not merely countenancing but sharing in the amusements of the laity. But they did nothing to win esteem for and raise the status

of the lower, ill-paid clergy, who appear on the whole to have been hard-working and well-intentioned, with a fellow-feeling for the cares and burdens of their parishioners. Between the fox-hunting bishops and canons and the out-at-elbows country parsons there was a large body of learned, scholarly divines, who reflected lustre on their class. But as a power in social life, the Anglican Church could not bear comparison with the Roman Church. In the first place, an authority which laid no claim to infallibility could not exercise the same influence as one that asserted its supremacy over all matters temporal and spiritual. And, in addition, Protestantism favoured independence of thought. This was more observable in the sects outside the Anglican Church. Narrow as was the creed of the Presbyterians and that of the other dissenting bodies which sprang up later, it was a creed held by conviction; it was acquired, not merely accepted.

As far as women were concerned, the result of the theological change was that, while there were numerous examples of individual piety, there was no attempt at organized religious work. Both inside the Anglican Church and in the ranks of the Puritans there were women noted for their zeal and active benevolence. But neither Anglicans nor Puritans sought, like the Romanists, to turn the

great engine of woman's power to systematic use. To the Puritans religion was a personal affair, in which faith counted for more than works. As for the Anglican Church, it was, in the seventeenth century, hampered by too many difficulties (among which may be counted the formalism of many of its own ministers) to attempt any social work. Indeed, the teaching of Church doctrine was neglected in many places, and, according to John Evelyn—

> "people had no principles, and grew very ignorant of even the common points of Christianity, all devotion now being placed in hearing sermons and discourses of speculative and notional things."

The curious attempt, already referred to, made by Mary Astell to establish a Protestant nunnery frightened the orthodox Church party. It savoured to them of Popery. What she aimed at was to lead women to embrace a higher and more purposeful life. Her so-called nunnery was a kind of retreat for ladies where they could carry on religious exercises and intellectual studies. It was intended as a haven for those who disliked the frivolities of society, and desired to pursue serious aims. But the proposal was not only laughed down, but abused as a scheme to propagate Roman Catholicism. A lady, supposed to be Lady Elizabeth Hastings,

offered to give £10,000 for the building, but was deterred by the false reports spread by terrified Protestants.

Mary Astell's book, "A Serious Proposal to Ladies," deserves to be remembered as a unique work in that period. She was a reformer who, in the present day, would have been in the front rank of the workers for the advancement of women. She pleaded as much for mental as moral improvement, and perceived very clearly the disadvantages under which the women of the day laboured with their flimsy education and the discouragement of all attempts to follow a more rational system.

Bishop Atterbury's remarks on Mary Astell may be quoted as illustrating the surprise felt by cultivated ecclesiastics at the display of literary ability in women. Writing to Smalridge in 1706, he says—

"I happened, about a fortnight ago, to dine with Mrs. Astell. She spoke to me of my sermon, and desired me to print it (the sermon was delivered on the election of the Lord Mayor); and after I had given her the proper answers, hinted to me that she would be glad of perusing it. I complied with her request, and sent her the sermon next day. Yesternight she returned it, with this sheet of remarks, which I cannot forbear communicating to you, because I take them to be of an extraordinary nature, considering they come from the pen of a woman. Indeed,

one would not imagine a woman had written them. There is not an expression that carries the least air of her sex from the beginning to the end of it."

The bishop does not divulge the exact nature of Mary Astell's remarks, but, as he takes them in such good part, they were probably not unfavourable to himself. The fact that a woman was capable of literary criticism which was not of a feminine tone filled him with astonishment.

Among the women most noted for piety and good works in the seventeenth century was Mary, daughter of the Earl of Cork, and wife of the Earl of Warwick, a warm friend of the Puritans. The Countess, although a Churchwoman, seems to have found no difficulty in breathing the theological atmosphere of her husband's household, where Puritan discourses were frequently heard. She was born in the year of the accession of Charles I., 1625, and lived to see some eighteen years of the Restoration. Her biographer, Dr. Walker, speaks of her as "great by her tongue, for never woman used one better." She is also said to have been "great by her pen," and "great in her nobleness of living and in her free and splendid hospitality;" likewise "great in her conquest of herself and the mastery of her passions." She was very strict in the observance of her religious exercises, and in her

influence on the company about her is enigmatically described as "like a spiritual stone."

The Countess of Warwick was no less esteemed as a mistress than as a landlord, and

"as a neighbour she was so kind and courteous, it advanced the rent of adjacent houses to be situated near her. Not only her house and table, but her countenance and very heart were open to all persons of quality in a considerable circuit; and for the inferior sort, if they were sick or tempted, or in any distress of body or mind, whither should they go but to the good Countess, whose closet or still-house was their shop for chirurgery, and herself (for she would visit the meanest of them personally) and ministers whom she would send to them, their spiritual physicians?"

Lady Warwick not only acted the Lady Bountiful among the poor, distributing beef and bread regularly to the needy of four parishes, but she extended her charity to the cause of education. The poor children she placed in schools; scholars she provided with means to go to the university, and the meagre salaries of ministers of religion she supplemented out of her abundant wealth.

Then there was Lady Elizabeth Hastings, daughter of the Earl of Huntingdon, who aided missionary work abroad, and spent freely in her own neighbourhood on charitable works; the celebrated Lady Russell, wife of Lord William

Russell; Bishop Burnet's wife, together with others of less fame, who were known for their piety and active benevolence. A careful examination of this period will reveal much individual effort put forth by women under that strongest of all motive-forces—the religious impulse, but little organized work, either secular or otherwise, for the bettering of humanity.

CHAPTER IX.

WITCHCRAFT.

Universality of the belief in witchcraft—Persecution of witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—Attitude of the Puritans—Origin of the witch—First use of the term—Enactments against witchcraft—The Essex persecutions—The last judicial execution.

THERE is one aspect of women's relation to the Church in the period under review which cannot be passed over without some brief notice, although any detailed examination of the subject would be impossible in a book of this scope and purpose. The subject of witchcraft, which has filled so many hundreds of volumes, is, after all, only a branch of a still larger subject—superstition. The beliefs of one age are the superstitions of the next, but it is sometimes difficult to say where the dividing-line should be drawn, for while a belief is not necessarily a superstition, a superstition has frequently the force and reality of a belief. The belief in witchcraft was very slow in passing into the phase of a superstition. Both the Catholic and the Protestant

Church for many centuries denounced witchcraft as one of the greatest forms of evil, to be withstood by every possible means. To doubt its reality was to doubt one of the articles of faith. At certain periods in history, the persecution of witches broke forth like one of the great physical plagues that from time to time scourged Europe. The belief in witchcraft was a moral pestilence, insidious, far-reaching, and deadly in its effects.

Magic and sorcery have been believed in from the earliest times of recorded history. But although, in the first centuries of the Christian Church and throughout the Middle Ages, there was a dread of the black art, and those who practised it were liable to numerous punishments, and to death itself, there was, curiously enough, far less persecution than prevailed in later and more enlightened periods. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were worse than the sixth, and the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were far more persecuting periods than the twelfth and thirteenth. Michelet, writing generally of the fourteenth century, says the witch saw before her—

"a horrible career of torments lighted up for three or four hundred years by the stake. After 1300, her medical knowledge is condemned as baleful, her remedies are proscribed as if they were poisons."

With the uprising of the Protestant Church in the sixteenth century came a great wave of superstition. In the reign of Elizabeth, Bishop Jewell, preaching before the queen (1568), said—

"It may please your Grace to understand that witches and sorcerers within these few last years are marvellously increased within your Grace's realm. Your Grace's subjects pine away even unto the death, their colour fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their speech is benumbed, their knees are bereft. I pray God they never practise *further than upon the subjects.*"

There was no doubt about the sincerity of the bishop's belief. "These eyes," he said, "have seen most evident and manifest marks of their wickedness." The reformers were the strongest believers in and the bitterest persecutors of witchcraft. Not even Innocent VIII., who, in 1484, promulgated a Bull against witchcraft and heresy, and thereby gave a great impetus to the persecution on the Continent, was more virulent against witches than Luther. "I should have no compassion on these witches," said Luther, in a discussion on witchcraft. "I would burn all of them." And he adds, "Witchcraft is the devil's own proper work."

In Scotland, where the Reformed Church exercised great sway, the persecution was much keener than in England.

"When a woman had fallen under suspicion, the minister from the pulpit denounced her by name, exhorted his parishioners to give evidence against her, and prohibited any one from sheltering her."

In the seventeenth century the belief in witchcraft was much fostered by the Puritan party, who were the bitterest of persecutors. The Puritans were diligent students of the Old Testament, and doubtless considered that they had full warrant for their action from certain much-quoted passages in Scripture. The Puritans, like the Fathers in the Early Christian Church, had a very real belief in and horror of the power of supernatural evil; and, like the Fathers, they too believed that women were more inherently wicked than men—that they were more liable to assaults of Satan, and more easily drawn into communion with evil spirits.

Numerous as were the punishments inflicted upon sorcerers and magicians, the persecution of witches was far greater. King James I., in his "Demonology," asks, "What can be the cause that there are twentie women given to that craft where there is only one man?" And he gives as his reason that women are frailer than men, quoting the fall of Eve as the beginning of Satan's sovereignty over womankind. There was, however, a more obvious reason for the fact that

women were so much more frequently denounced than men for practising the black art. The chief doctors and surgeons in former times were women. There was no formulated science of medicine down to the seventeenth century, but certain persons, generally women, acquired a large amount of knowledge of the properties of plants useful for healing, and methods of distilling and mixing vegetable juices. The healing art, like nursing, fell into the hands of women, and herbal lore was transmitted from mother to daughter, just as skill in cookery and in special kinds of needlework was handed down. Deftness, appreciation of detail, quick observation, and patience supplied the place of written knowledge. The conditions of life during the Middle Ages, and even down to the last century, were such as to afford plenty of scope for the exercise of practical ability. The women who had the greatest knowledge of the properties of plants were, naturally, those most dependent on nature—women of the poorer class, but women endowed with a greater share of insight, and larger brain power than their companions. The "wise women," who usually dwelt alone in some humble dwelling remote from their neighbours, and "lived on their wits," were naturally regarded with a tinge of awe by the ignorant, and were credited with some

supernatural power. Their appearance and their habits—the result of poverty and loneliness—caused them to be looked upon with suspicion. To a wrinkled, repulsive visage was frequently united a temper equally obnoxious, and which was embittered by the gibes and sneers which were freely cast at the "old hag," whose weapon of defence was her tongue. The curses which she poured forth on her tormentors inspired dread, and if by chance some bodily affliction attacked the cursed ones, it was invariably attributed to malevolence. All sorts of ills were ascribed to the spite of these outcasts of society: the maiming of cattle, the withering of pasture, diseases bodily and mental, misfortunes of every kind. The witch was never a bringer of good; she was always thought to be working evil, with or without motive. Women have been credited, not only by the ignorant multitude, but by philosophers, with the power, at certain seasons, of turning milk sour, making dogs savage, and effecting other things, by their mere presence.

It is not until the twelfth century that there is any definite mention of witchcraft in England. This seems strange when it is remembered that in the time of the early Britons what was known as magic or sorcery was practised by the wives of the Druid doctors. These women were noted for their

skill in herbal medicine, and even credited with the power of causing evil as well as healing wounds. But the term "witch" does not seem to have come into use until the period mentioned. The twelfth century has been described by Mr. Lecky as the turning-point of European intellect. The first glimmerings of incredulity were showing forth. The Church became aware of some opposing force, and assumed the offensive. Circumstances that had hitherto passed unnoticed were regarded as danger-signals. Any evidences of unusual capacity for controlling physical forces, such as the "medicine women" showed, were regarded with hostility. Their power implied converse with Satan, for by no other means was it supposed that such knowledge and skill could be obtained. There was at that time a widespread belief in the supernatural, in the presence of evil spirits who infested the earth in all sorts of shapes to torment and deceive men. The theory that the wise woman was an emissary from the Prince of Darkness accorded with the popular delusions. The witch gradually became a distinct personality, a figure which troubled every society. Diseased imagination united to ignorance of physical science caused the belief in witchcraft to become a terror for centuries.

Witchcraft offered a solution of the problem of

evil. How otherwise to account for the ills which beset humanity? It is difficult for us to realize the panic which took possession of people's minds at the appearance of misfortunes such as plague, famine, drought, floods, and the like. The terrible pestilence, for which we can now to some extent account, appeared like a visitation of Providence or the direct work of Satan to an age which knew nothing of the laws of health, of the courses of disease, and very little of the structure and functions of the bodily organs. As time advanced, the belief in the power and malevolence of the women called witches increased. The Church, following in the steps of those Fathers who had credited women with being endowed with special capacity for evil, commenced a virulent persecution of witches. In the reign of John a woman was tried for witchcraft, but there was little detailed mention of such trials until the fourteenth century. In the year 1324 there was a celebrated case in Ireland, and this, the first trial of which we have any full account, was not that of some mis-shapen, miserable old woman living in a hovel, but a woman of good social rank and possessed of wealth, Lady Alice Kyteler, of Kilkenny. The lady's troubles arose partly out of her excessive liking for matrimony. She had four husbands, and the principal

count against her was that she had made away with these husbands by magic. There was at this period in the Papal chair a pope who held strong views on the subject of sorcery, Pope John XVII., and who issued the first Bull promulgated against it. Through the instrumentality of one of his Irish bishops, Lady Alice Kyteler and others were denounced as sorcerers, the Lady Alice being accused of causing the death of her various husbands, and having converse with evil spirits. The arbitrary action of the ecclesiastical authorities excited so much dissatisfaction that even the Lord Chancellor expostulated with the bishop, but received as reply that the Church was above all law. The Lady Alice, after being excommunicated, finally escaped from the priestly meshes, and retired to England, where she died. During the trial a woman, who declared she had received instruction in magic arts from Lady Alice, was flogged six times by order of the bishops.

There were, however, no regular enactments against witchcraft until the reign of Henry VIII. Up to that time, unless the supposed sorceress was also accused of the crime of poisoning, she was not condemned to death. But in 1541, conjuring, sorcery, and witchcraft were all put together as crimes for which capital punishment could be

inflicted. Statutes against witchcraft were also enacted in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I.

John Wier, a physician of Cleves, wrote a treatise in 1563, in which he described witches as lunatics labouring under Satanic influence. All women he considered to be peculiarly subject to delusions created by malignant agency, and witches he regarded, in fact, as exaggerated examples of the inherent moral weakness of the female sex.

With the rise of Puritanism in the seventeenth century came a second great wave of superstition. The stern theology of the men of the Commonwealth was embittered by the darkest of beliefs. They were always looking for direct manifestations of the power of evil. It was their conviction that Satan was embodied in the persons of the unhappy women who were called witches, and that to hound them to death was a religious duty. The Puritans held with great firmness that a curse rested on womanhood. They found it quite easy to believe that certain women were specially chosen instruments of evil, for the whole sex they regarded as created for the trial and temptation of men. Undoubtedly the Puritans did much to enforce respect for women at a period when licentiousness was rife. They had an honest desire to raise the standard of public morals, and preserve order and decency.

But they were actuated more by a desire to guard men from evil than by a reverence for womanhood. Though individually they made good husbands and fathers, their theology was a relentless creed, which permeated their lives with hard, unsympathetic views, and condemned sinners without mercy. The intense vitality of their belief in the omnipresence of evil clouded their perceptions and blurred their judgment. Hence their readiness to believe in witchcraft, and the savagery of their persecution.

Scripture, they said, was on their side. They pointed to the Witch of Endor, and to the declaration, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." All sorts of gruesome ideas had grown up and been handed down as to the power of witches, and became more widespread and intensified by the fanatical zeal of the Puritans. It was not until the second half of the seventeenth century that the full fury of the persecution blazed forth, though previously there had been frequent trials and executions. Thus in the early part of the reign of James I., who was responsible for much of the persecution, a woman was tried and hanged at King's Lynn. A sailor had thrown a stone at her boy, whereupon she cursed the sailor roundly, and hoped his fingers would rot off, which happened two years later. Then she got into a quarrel with a neighbour,

who was seized with violent pains, and felt the bed rocking up and down. The woman was denounced as a witch and condemned to death. Like other innocent persons accused of crime, she at last got to believe what her enemies said of her, and actually brought herself to confess that she had practised unholy arts.

In 1645 there was a great outbreak of persecution in Essex. In 1664 occurred the celebrated trial of witches at Bury St. Edmunds. There were living at Lowestoft two lone women whose temper and demeanour caused them to be disliked by the inhabitants of that little fishing hamlet. From the children they endured much petty persecution, and were treated as outcasts by the adult population. Nobody would even sell them fish. The two victims, who were inappropriately named Amy and Rose, cursed and prophesied evil things. Some children were seized with fits, during which they declared they saw the two women coming to torment them. After eight years of accusations, the women were brought to trial. Sir Matthew Hale presided, expressing his belief that the Scriptures proved the reality of witchcraft. The women were hung, which was the common mode of dealing with them. In Scotland they were usually burnt.

There is no need to multiply instances. During

the sittings of the Long Parliament, as many as three thousand persons are said to have been executed, exclusive of those who were "done to death" by enraged mobs. In 1640 a witch is described in a contemporary publication as—

"the devil's otter-hound living both on land and sea, and doing mischief in either; she kills more beasts than a licensed butcher in Lent, yet is nere the fatter; she's but a dry nurse in the flesh, yet gives such to the spirit. A witch rides many times poast on hellish business, yet if a ladder do but stop her, she will be hanged ere she goes any further."

The last judicial execution took place in England in 1716, when a woman and her daughter, aged nine, were put to death at Huntingdon, accused of selling their souls to the devil. But years after this date the persecution continued, and women were assailed by the rabble as witches, frequently dying of the injuries they received. The penal statutes against witchcraft were repealed in 1751. This, however, did not do away with the belief which was held by people in various classes of life. John Wesley was perhaps the last noted person who clung to what eventually became a mere superstition, which only survived in obscure places.

After the Restoration came in a different temper and view of life. On the one side were the gay and

frivolous, who mocked at the grim Puritan with his terrific beliefs; on the other were the philosophers and the intellectual world, who explained by natural causes the so-called supernatural appearances. The Anglican Church held a middle course between the sceptics and the fanatics. There were some, like Joseph Glanvil, who, in 1681, took up the defence of witchcraft; and there were bishops who promulgated persecution. The clergy had a strong leaning to superstition, and inclined to the side of the fanatics; but they were restrained from the greatest excesses of the Puritans by the influence of the educational portion, whose learning and enlightenment reflected credit on the Church at a period when it greatly needed strengthening.

CHAPTER X.

WOMEN AND THE ARTS.

Development of the arts in the seventeenth century—Introduction of women on the stage—Corruption of the period—Character of the drama—Wearing masks by spectators—The French company at Blackfriars Theatre—The first English company with women players—Famous actresses—English female artists in the Stuart period—Foundation of the Royal Academy of Arts—Angelica Kaufmann and Mary Moser elected members—Their career—Fanny Reynolds—Sir Joshua's opinion of his sister's work—Mrs. Cosway—Mrs. Carpenter—Character of eighteenth-century work—Women's place in musical art—Musical education in early times—Love of music in the sixteenth century—Instruments played by women—Music abolished by the Puritans—Musical maidservants in the seventeenth century—The first English opera—Purcell's early work—Performance at a ladies' school.

It is in the seventeenth century, remarkable for political and religious strife, and a general unsettling of society, that the history of the fine arts, as far as women are concerned, really begins. There is, in fact, very little to record of the progress of the arts in England before this period. Unfavourable as the age seemed for artistic progress when the public mind was so largely occupied with momentous

questions affecting the national life, it was signalized by three notable events, viz. the introduction of women to the stage, the commencement of English opera, and the uprising of female painters. The dramatic revolution, as it may be called, being the most striking of these events, will be touched upon first.

The middle of the seventeenth century, when women first began to appear on the stage in England, was a period of unexampled laxity. It was not simply that morality was at a low ebb, and that the passions reigned uppermost. That was the case in feudal times when the intellectual side of humanity was only half awakened, and the range of interests and ideas, of taste and knowledge, was limited by physical obstacles. The world was a sealed book to mediæval men and women. But the seventeenth century had no such excuse. It had opened the clasps; it had the power of choice, but it hugged the sins of past ages to its breast. Seeing the good, it chose the evil.

It was an unfortunate moment for the introduction of actresses, and their presence gave rise to many scandals, but abuses had long been rife on the stage, and dramatic performances had been occasionally suspended even in the reign of Elizabeth. The blame cannot be attributed to the

pernicious example of France as far as the plays themselves are concerned, for it is agreed that French comedy in the reign of Charles II. was not in the least coarse. This was the period of Molière's fame. Two or three years after the accession of Anne, who did not countenance playhouses by her presence, the Puritan party of that day earnestly hoped that the Queen might be induced to interdict stage performances, or at least to prohibit certain pieces. There is not the slightest doubt that the complaints made of obscene language and manners were well founded. The plays remain as witnesses, and the record of the scenes enacted in the green-room and the general licence indulged in by the players furnish condemnatory evidence. But the purists were not content with trying to uphold morality and public decency. At that time natural phenomena were still regarded by many people with superstitious terror. Sickness, storms, and other calamities were looked upon as the visitations of wrathful Providence.

Now it happened that a disastrous tempest had been raging, a tempest fiercer than any known for many years. A day of fasting and humiliation had been appointed, and in the face of that public acknowledgment of national sin the irreverent players chose to produce *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*, with

as faithful a representation of real storms as they could contrive.

"Surely," writes one shocked contemporary, "the Players have little reason to expect that they shall still go on in their abominable Outrages; who, 'tis to be observed with Indignation, did, as we are assured, within a few days after we felt the late dreadful storm, entertain their audience with the ridiculous Representation of what had filled us with so great Horror in their Plays called *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*, as if they designed to Mock the Almighty Power of God, *who alone commands the Winds and the Seas, and they obey him.*" *

Queen Anne did not suspend the plays, but she issued an edict for the better regulation of the theatres. With a view to abolishing abuses and indecencies, it was commanded—

"that no person of what quality soever presume to go behind the scenes or come upon the stage either before or during the acting of any play; that no woman be allowed or presume to wear a vizard mask in either of the theatres," †

together with several other regulations.

It was customary in the days of Charles II. for ladies to go to the theatre masked, the presumption being that the language of the plays was so coarse that no woman could sit and hear them in mixed company with her face uncovered. But it was a

* "Tracts on the Stage." † Fitzgerald.

practice that was liable to lead to all sorts of disorders. Under the disguise of the mask women of all degrees accosted strangers, and there were always men ready enough to avail themselves of the general licence as to behaviour. Ladies then sat in the pit, which, after the boxes, was the most aristocratic portion of the house, for which the prices ranged from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 4*s.* in the money of that period.

The custom of having women to act was introduced from the Continent, where it had long prevailed. At the time when Corneille's plays were constantly being acted, about 1633, there were a good many actresses on the French stage. There was much dramatic activity in Paris at that time. The French were very eager playgoers, and when a tragedy having for its subject the story of Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn was produced, there was such a rush to see the piece that four doorkeepers were crushed to death on the first night, greatly to the pride and delight of the author, Jean Puget de la Serre, who exclaimed with triumph: "Voilà ce qu'on appelle de bonnes pièces." In his exultation he declared he would not yield the palm to Corneille, until his great contemporary had caused *five* doorkeepers to be killed in one day.

In the prevailing state of easy morals in the

England of the Restoration the appearance of actresses was an incentive to licence, and every advantage was taken of the innovation by the court gallants. The actresses were probably no worse than many of the ladies in the audience, but their mere existence gave occasion for evil. Evelyn, whose code of morals and taste were too high for that period, says, in 1666, that he hardly ever goes to the theatres—

"for many reasons now, as they were abused to an atheistical liberty. Fowle and indecent women now, and never till now, were permitted to appear and act."

Thomas Brand, a Puritan, expressed great delight when he heard that certain actresses had been hissed and pelted. The first result of bringing women on to the stage was to give the rein to more unbridled licence than before in the manners of the court and of society.

It was the presence of Queen Henrietta which brought over a French company of players with women among them to England in 1659. They established themselves at the celebrated theatre in Blackfriars. But whether their distinguished countrywoman was unable or unwilling to do anything on their behalf, they were very roughly received, less because of the women in the company

than because they were foreigners. Their advent gave Prynne an opportunity for venting his indignation. To the stern Puritan the sight of women on the boards was a great additional aggravation. No English company seems to have introduced women till 1660. Pepys, who, as every one knows, was an indefatigable playgoer, records that the first time he saw women act was on January 3, 1660. This was at the Theatre Royal, Clare Market, the play being *The Beggar's Bush.* Three days later he saw actresses in Ben Jonson's play, *The Silent Woman.* It has been said that *Othello* was the play in which women first appeared in England, at a performance given on December 8, 1660. Mrs. Anne Marshall, Mrs. Sanders (afterwards to become famous as Mrs. Betterton, a most successful impersonator of Shakespeare's female parts), Mrs. Margaret Hughes, and Mrs. Coleman were among the first actresses who appeared in public. Mrs. Betterton, whose character was unexceptionable, was selected to give lessons in elocution to the two princesses, Mary and Anne, daughters of James II.

A sort of precedent for women acting in stage plays was to be found in the court performances. It was not till the reign of Charles II. that professional actresses appeared in public, but Queen

Anne, wife of James I., was accustomed to take an active part in the masques performed at court, where she was both actress and manager.* That these were not mere impromptus may be gathered from the fact that the cost of a performance often exceeded £1000. In the reign of Charles I. the ladies of the court, headed by the Queen, Henrietta Maria, played a French pastoral at Hampton Court to enliven the Christmas season. The French Queen was very favourably disposed towards the stage, and when the churchwardens and constables in 1631 petitioned Archbishop Laud to get Blackfriars Theatre removed, on the ground that it was a nuisance to trade and the public generally, and begged that the council would see to the matter, the answer was returned that the queen was "well affected towards plays, and that therefore good regulation is more to be provided than suppression decreed." Various members of the aristocracy also took to the stage, or rather the actors under their protection. One of the most constant supporters of the dramatic art was the Countess of Holland, daughter of Sir Walter Cope, whose husband had been executed in 1649. Holland House, Kensington, was frequently the scene of dramatic entertainments.

* Doran's "Annals of the Stage."

Women are now so necessary to stage performances that it is odd to find arguments gravely set forth in favour of their presence. The reasons assigned for introducing women were that men failed to act women's parts satisfactorily; that boys were no more suitable than girls, and some of the "boys" were middle-aged men, who could not properly impersonate young maidens. When in the reign of Charles II. patents were granted to Killigrew and Davenant for their theatres, the following regulations appeared—

"And forasmuch as many plays formerly acted do contain several profane, obscene, and scurrilous passages, and the women's parts therein have been acted by men in the habits of women at which some have taken offence; for the preventing of these abuses for the future we do strictly charge, command and enjoin that from henceforth no new plays shall be acted by either of the said companies containing any passages offensive to piety and good manners, nor any old or revived play containing any such offensive passages as aforesaid, until the same shall be corrected and purged by the said masters or governors of the said respective companies from all such offensive and scandalous passages as aforesaid. And we do likewise permit and give leave that all the women's parts to be acted in either of the said two companies from this time to come may be performed by women, so long as these recreations which by reason of the abuses aforesaid were scandalous and offensive may by such reformation be esteemed not only harmless delights, but useful and instructive representations

of human life, by such of our good subjects as shall resort to see the same."

The character of the plays acted in the seventeenth century fitted the temper of the times. Wycherley, Congreve, Mrs. Aphra Behn, and their brothers and sisters in the craft were not too outspoken for the taste of that day. Evelyn, it is true, was a severe censor, but he was a man of the world who had travelled and seen many things. "In London," he says, "there were more wicked and obscene plays permitted than in all the world besides." And this, too, in Lent, which added much to the offence.

It is said that the audiences give the tone to the stage, and that a moral and cultured public would purify the drama. The audiences of the Restoration period did not certainly perform their part towards effecting such a consummation. Their behaviour in the playhouse has often been noted. They showed plainly that low jests and coarse allusions were to their taste and what they expected, and they would have scoffed at or yawned over more decorous language. If the piece were not to their liking they treated the performers with scant ceremony, and hissed and pelted them. Such demonstrations were the more frequent owing to the custom of caricaturing living persons. The

actresses, when not playing, moved about in the front rows of the auditorium among their admirers. Then, again, the occupants of the pit would make audible comments on the ladies sitting in the boxes, who did not disdain to retort, greatly to the amusement of the rest of the house. The theatre was the rallying point for adventurers and libertines of both sexes, and served many purposes besides its legitimate one of entertainment.

In the eighteenth century, when the custom of toasting ladies prevailed, plays were given "for the entertainment of the new Toasts and several Ladies of Quality." This always brought a crowded audience. The auditorium was frequently the scene of quarrels, and the custom of allowing spectators to stand about on the stage was the cause of much disorder. On one occasion, in 1721, a regular fray occurred, owing to the presence of some tipsy noblemen; and the king, George I., gave orders that thenceforth a guard of soldiers should protect the actors during the performance. One could not expect in that age to find any regard paid to the sentiments of women, and omissions made from the plays lest their susceptibilities should be wounded. Yet this was done in one instance certainly,* and the passage

* Doran.

left out was not one of peculiar coarseness, but one which vaunted man's superiority over woman. Those were not the days of equal rights between men and women, and there could hardly have been many women who would have been offended at the claims of the male sex to supremacy. Dr. Trusler, writing of the eighteenth century, says—

"Many of our comedies are improper for a young lady to be seen at; as, indeed, there are few English comedies that a modest girl can see without hurting her delicacy."

The attentions of the audience to a popular actress were a little overwhelming at times. A knot of admirers would gather round the door of a lady's dressing-room, and insist upon escorting her home. As late as the middle of the century the manners of the gallery were so rough that it was no uncommon thing for an orange to be flung at a lady in court dress.

Whatever condemnation the stage incurred in the seventeenth century, it was, whether deservedly or not, quite as much held up to opprobrium in the eighteenth. A tract, published in 1726 by William Law, after describing the playhouse as a "sink of corruption and debauchery," goes on to say—

"This is not the state of the Play House through any accidental abuse, as any innocent or good thing may be

abused; but that corruption and debauchery are the truly natural and genuine effects of the stage entertainment."

But in spite of the abuses that existed in connection with the stage, the fact remains that all through the eighteenth century there was a succession of actresses whose celebrity was not confined to their own age. The mere mention of the names of Mrs. Oldfield, Mrs. Porter, Peg Woffington, Mrs. Cibber, Kitty Clive, and, later, the incomparable Sarah Siddons, Miss Farren, and Mrs. Jordan, recalls the glories of the playhouse and the privileges enjoyed by audiences of those days.

In the last century it would have seemed scarcely less absurd to question the propriety of having women to act than it would now. The difference in the course of little over fifty years was marvellous. There is no department of the fine arts in which women have progressed with so much rapidity as in acting. It is hardly necessary to record the triumphs won by popular actresses, or to chronicle the successes which have marked the career of numbers who are not in the first rank. Women have entered upon the stage as upon their natural inheritance. Their presence has stimulated the talents of their male compeers. The attempt to represent human nature with only

one half of humanity seems absurdly futile to later generations, who find it impossible to conceive of stage performances in which the players were all men.

It has been seen how the first advent of women on the stage was productive of increased licence and freedom of manners—an almost inevitable result considering what the age was, and the novelty of the experiment. The influence of the drama in England, and the important part which it has played in the development of our social life, have been very widely discussed. Those who view the stage as a great educator, and those—a dwindling number—who regard it as a debaser of public morals, can both find apt illustrations to prove their contentions. But whichever standpoint be taken, the stage, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was far more than at the present day the national recreation. There were fewer counterbalancing attractions.

The Puritan party as a whole, of course, held the stage in horror, but more than one actress whose name has come down to us was descended from a stern Republican—like Anne and Rebecca Marshall, who were said to be daughters of a divine of the Long Parliament. The dissoluteness of the stage was in part attributable to the Puritan

spirit which kept the soberer members of the community from countenancing the theatre by their presence, and deterred some from entering the dramatic profession. Stage-acting was decried as a calling to which only the debased would resort, and there were plentiful exhortations to those who valued their soul's welfare to abstain from looking upon corrupting sights. It was difficult, especially in the seventeenth century, for women of unblemished reputation to go on the stage without being besmirched with the vices of the worst of their companions. Many of the mistresses of Charles II. and his courtiers belonged to the theatrical profession. But the century which delighted in the fascinations of Nell Gwynn, in the beauty of Moll Davies, which watched the performances of Prince Rupert's mistress, Mrs. Hughes, saw also the famous Mrs. Betterton, of unquestioned virtue, and such actresses as Mrs. Bracegirdle and Elizabeth Barry. There never has been a time when the stage has been without women of high repute as well as brilliant talent to uphold its honour.

It is not until the reign of Charles I. that there is any record of women artists. The first efforts of English artists were directed to the illumination of manuscripts. It was for several centuries the

only kind of art worth mentioning in England. There were, it is true, clever goldsmiths and workers in precious stones. It was the custom to have books, especially religious books, richly bound and ornamented. Jacquetta, Duchess of Bedford, gave a missal with gold clasps, which had belonged to the Duchess of Portland, to her nephew, Henry VI. But there was little painting of pictures, except of the rudest kind, up to the seventeenth century. And, as far as women are concerned, the record is absolutely bare. They do not even appear among the illuminators. But with the days of Vandyck's residence in England begins our roll of female artists. Anne Carlisle shared the royal patronage with the great Flemish painter, whom she outlived. She was a great favourite at court, and the king's fine taste would not have tolerated an inferior artist. Then followed a period when the fine arts were forgotten in the turmoil of war, and crushed by the gloomy, repressive Puritan spirit. But after the Restoration, matters changed, and from that time onwards there is a steadily increasing stream of artists, though the women are few in number, up to the present century. The only female painters of any note in the seventeenth century were those who obtained royal patronage, like Mary Beale, a painter in both oil and water-colours, and a most

industrious artist, highly commended by the famous portrait painter, Sir Peter Lely. Anne Killigrew, maid of honour to Mary of Modena, Duchess of York, had only twenty-five years in which to make a name, but she has secured a niche not only through her pictures, which included portraits of the Duke and Duchess of York, but also by her verses.

It is anticipating events to proceed to the days of Angelica Kaufmann and Mary Moser, but, for the sake of preserving the continuity of the subject, a rapid review may be taken of the work done by women in the last century.

In 1768 the Royal Academy was founded, the first keeper being George Moser, for many years manager of a private academy for artists in St. Martin's Lane, London. He was the father of Mary Moser, who, like Angelica Kaufmann, was elected a member of the Royal Academy, these two being the only women on whom that honour was conferred. Both had signed a memorial to George III. in favour of the foundation of an Academy of Arts. When it was opened in 1769, Angelica Kaufmann sent two large paintings, and she continued for years to be an exhibitor. Mary Moser sent a flower piece in oils, and two years later a figure subject. After her marriage with Captain Lloyd she ceased to appear among the ranks of professional painters,

though she continued to exhibit at the Academy uninterruptedly until 1779, and at intervals to a later period, her last contribution being in the year 1800.

Angelica Kaufmann and Mary Moser were both of Swiss parentage. Angelica's father was a native of Schwartzenberg, near Lake Constance, and George Moser was born at Schaffhausen. Angelica Kaufmann was born about 1741—the exact date is uncertain—and Mary Moser in 1744. But while the more celebrated artist spent the years of her childhood among the beautiful surroundings of Morbegno, in Lombardy, and on the shores of Lake Como, and acquired her early training in the galleries of Milan, Mary Moser was born and educated in England. Angelica Kaufmann did not come to this country until 1765, after she had made a name for herself in Italy, and had helped her father to decorate the Church of Schwartzenberg with frescoes, had painted the portraits of several noble personages, had been warmly praised and munificently treated by the Bishop of Constance, and had become the pet of the ladies about the court of the Governor of Milan, Francis III., Duke of Modena. It was through Lady Wentworth, the wife of the English Minister at Venice, Mr. Murray, that Angelica Kaufmann came to England, where

she was welcomed by artists both English and foreign, and made much of in the fashionable world. The painter Fuseli, whom she had already met in Rome, was desperately in love with her, but she, unfortunately, fell into the meshes of that arch adventurer who passed himself off as Count de Horn, while her fellow-artist, Mary Moser, was languishing for love of Fuseli, who was indifferent or blind to her attachment. In 1781 Angelica Kaufmann married Antonio Zucchi, a Venetian artist, and left England for Italy never to return. Fuseli consoled himself with a Miss Sophia Rawlins in 1788, the year in which he was elected Associate of the Royal Academy, and Miss Moser married Captain Hugh Lloyd.

Mary Moser, at the time when she and Angelica Kaufmann joined the ranks of the "Forty," was the only flower painter in the Academy, with the exception of John Baker. If Angelica Kaufmann, with her brilliant beauty and talents, has eclipsed her humbler friend, yet Miss Moser contrived to secure a very fair share of artistic success. She gained very practical recognition from the royal family, the Queen commissioning her to paint a room at Frogmore, for which she was paid £900. The whole decoration of this room was in flowers, flower-painting being Miss Moser's speciality. The

last time she exhibited at the Academy she sent a figure subject.

Fanny Reynolds, the retiring and unappreciated sister of Sir Joshua Reynolds, was one of Angelica Kaufmann's many friends. Perhaps she did not object to the romantic devotion paid by her famous brother to the fascinating young Italian artist who captivated all hearts. Frances Reynolds had many difficulties in the way of her artistic studies. She got no help or even encouragement from her brother, who, far from tendering her any advice, disliked to see her paint, and ridiculed her miniatures, which, he said, "make other people laugh and me cry." Perhaps James Northcote, Sir Joshua's pupil, was right when he said that Miss Reynolds's portraits were an exact imitation of Sir Joshua's defects. This would account for the unfavourable judgment and harsh treatment poor Fanny always received from her brother.

Mrs. Cosway, another of Angelica Kaufmann's friends, and one of a very smart circle, first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1780. She was the daughter of an Englishman, or Irishman, named Hadfield, who kept an hotel at Florence, and sent his little girl to a convent to be educated. She wished to become a nun, but was dissuaded from that course by her mother desiring her company

when her father died, and the family moved to England. It was Angelica Kaufmann who eventually completed the work of converting Maria Hadfield from a religious to a secular life. Her husband was an R.A., wealthy, and much admired as an artist. Mrs. Cosway, like her husband, painted miniatures, and was very successful. She also possessed a good deal of musical talent, and was personally attractive, so that between them Mr. and Mrs. Cosway made numerous friends and quantities of money, for Cosway had a keen eye to business, and could turn everything to account. Their receptions were noted, and were attended by artists, men of letters, the most exclusive of the fashionable world, and also by royalty. But all this splendour faded away when Cosway took up the cause of the Revolutionists in France. His friends turned their backs on him, his wife's health failed, their only child died, and the last years of their married life were spent in a dull house in the Edgeware Road, London. After her husband's death, Mrs. Cosway went back to her native country.

In the closing years of the eighteenth century there were many landscape painters among women, but in the early part of the nineteenth century they declined, very few exhibiting at the Royal Academy. It was, however, a flourishing period for portrait

painters. "Never before or since have so many lady artists obtained such honours in a most difficult branch." * Mrs. Carpenter, who lived between 1793 and 1877, was pre-eminent among these, and was a regular exhibitor at the Academy from 1814 to 1866. Mrs. James Robertson was a clever miniature painter, and was elected a member of the Imperial Academy of St. Petersburg. She was also an exhibitor at the Royal Academy during the same period as Mrs. Carpenter.

It was not an easy matter at the close of the last century and the beginning of the present to obtain instruction in miniature painting, and the women who excelled did so entirely by their own laborious efforts. Later on this branch of the art fell into desuetude. Flower and fruit painting came much into vogue early in the century. It is a curious thing that the amateurs of art should have fallen so much into the background in the first half of this century. In the last decade of the eighteenth century the amateurs were rather distinguished. There were numbers of "honorary exhibitors" between 1793 and 1800 at the Royal Academy, who seem to have been so described because they were amateurs like Miss Spilsbury, Miss Serres, and other ladies.

* Ellen Clayton.

It seems strange that in music women have shown so little creative power. They have proved first-class executants, but as composers they have not attempted any great flights. With a few exceptions their productions have been confined to the lighter kinds of music, to songs and the simpler class of pianoforte works. They have rarely attempted orchestral pieces or the more elaborate forms of vocal composition. Symphonies, oratorios, operas, or even cantatas have very seldom issued from the pen of a woman. It is not, however, impossible that creative capacity may have existed in many women without finding direct expression or acknowledgment. Mendelssohn narrates how he was summoned to play before the Queen, who wished that he should accompany her in one of his compositions. He asked Her Majesty to select her favourite song, and when the Queen had chosen what she called quite the best, Mendelssohn was obliged to confess that the song was his sister's work, not his own. The elder Mendelssohn would probably have seen more impropriety in his daughter's name appearing in print than in his son taking credit for what he had not composed. Just as Caroline Herschell's large share in her brother's astronomic labours and Fanny Mendelssohn's authorship were not acknowledged,

so is it impossible to say that musical genius may not have been the heritage of some among the women of famous composers' families.

But women have always delighted in playing and singing, even in those early periods of our history when music in this country was chiefly a thing of ear and memory, there being hardly any musical literature and very few professional instructors. In the middle ages, throughout the Renaissance period, and down to the last century, music was part of polite education for both sexes. At the present day a gentleman may go comfortably through life with no more, if as much, knowledge of music as a Board School child, and not be accused of lack of breeding. For a woman in the middle and upper ranks, music has remained an essential feature of education. Indeed, it has been made far too much of, and many years are often wasted in attaining a very moderate degree of executive skill, with little pleasure or profit, by those who have not sufficient natural ability to make prolonged study useful.

In the present century the musical education of women has made great strides. Every opportunity has been taken for latent talent to develop by means of the best instruction. The academies and schools of music have raised the standard of private

teaching, besides directly educating vast numbers of students. The result is an ever-increasing number of really able performers and teachers, but very few composers. To the executive power of women there is no limit beyond that of the instrument. With regard to vocalism, there is the barrier of climate. We are not a nation of vocalists, and though there is a very large amount of respectable talent it is seldom that England produces a great singer.

One proof of the advanced musical education of women is to be found in their frequent presence as performers in high-class orchestras. It used to be a rare thing to see a woman appear on a concert platform in any capacity but that of vocalist or pianoforte player. Now she takes her place quite naturally among the "strings." To play in concerted music means a wider training, and one that has only become possible to women in recent times.

The English have always been a music-loving nation. The records of early times show in what esteem music was held. The harp was the favourite instrument of our forefathers. The possession of a harp was one of the three things necessary to a gentleman or a freeman in Wales, and slaves were not permitted to play on it. A gentleman's harp was never seized for debt, because he would then

have been degraded to the rank of a slave. The minstrel was as essential to English social life in the middle ages as the cook or the henchman. A writer in the thirteenth century speaks of the good singers in England at the court of Henry II. Erasmus in the sixteenth century remarks of the English :—

"They challenge the prerogative of having the most handsome women, of keeping the best table, and being most accomplished in the skill of music of any people."

At that time everybody, high or low, delighted in music. It was as much a part of education as reading and writing, and there was never a festival or entertainment of any kind without music. Curiously enough, ladies then played the bass viol, thought by some to be an "unmannerly instrument for a woman." The virginal, or as it is generally called the virginals, a sort of pianoforte; the cittern and the gittern, which were varieties of the lute and the guitar, were the instruments most in use by gentlewomen.* The virginal is said to have received its name from being played by young girls, or, according to some authorities, because it was an instrument used by the nuns in their hymns to the Virgin. It was expected of every lady that she must be able—

* Chappell, "Popular Music of the Olden Time."

"to play upon the virginals, lute, and cittern; and to read prick song (*i.e.* music written or pricked down) *at first sight.*"

So common was the lute that lute-strings were much in vogue as new year's gifts to ladies. Queen Elizabeth, as is well known, was a skilful performer on the lute and virginals, and her "Virginal Book" is frequently referred to in musical works. "Lady Nevill's Virginal Book" is another famous collection of sixteenth-century airs.

Queen Elizabeth gave great encouragement to sacred music, and issued express orders for the retention of the musical portion of the Church Service, and in her own chapel various instruments were used. She gave much offence to the stricter Protestants by her patronage of music.

All through the Tudor period England was merry with music, but with the triumph of the Puritans, in the seventeenth century, all this was changed. Music was denounced as corrupting and mischievous, like the other arts, and every effort made to prevent the people's enjoyment of it, either in their own homes or in the religious services. Under James I. there had been little encouragement given to music, and when the Civil War came, and the Commonwealth, with its austere doctrines, was established, there was no chance for musicians.

The fury of the Puritans against church music was shown in acts of violence. The organ of Westminster Abbey was broken down, and the pipes pawned for ale by roistering republicans. Ordinances were passed in 1644 for—

"the speedy demolishing of all organs and all matters of superstitions, monuments in all Cathedral or Collegiate or Parish Churches and Chapels throughout the Kingdom."

And even before then havoc had been made of the church organs. Of the court players no one knows—they disappeared. But after the Restoration the Royal Chapel Choir was re-formed with some difficulty, for both teachers and performers had been scattered to the four winds. Then followed the age of Purcell, Humphrey, Wise, and Blow.

Throughout the seventeenth century, and down to the time of the second George, ladies continued to play on the virginals and lute, and to practise reading music at sight.

"Part of a gentlewoman's bringing up is to sing, dance, play on the lute, or some such instrument, before she can say her *Pater Noster* or ten commandments: 'tis the next way their parents think to get them husbands, they are compelled to learn."

And just as Englishwomen of the present day are apt to lay aside their accomplishments after marriage, so, in the seventeenth century,

"they that being maids took so much pains to sing, play, and dance, with such cost and charge to their parents to get these graceful qualities, now being married, will scarce touch an instrument, they care not for it."

The very maidservants at that period understood music. Pepys speaks of a servant whom he and his wife took into their household, a poor, wretched girl, without proper clothing, but with a decided talent for singing, apparent even through a voice described by the diarist as furred for want of use. This was the fourth maid in the course of less than ten years whom Pepys praises for musical ability; and there was also the boy who was in the habit of playing his lute in bed at four in the morning, a habit that most employers would object to, but Pepys saw in it only occasion for praise.

The seventeenth century marks an era in our musical history, because it witnessed the first attempts at opera by English composers. Matthew Lock's opera, *Psyche*, produced in 1673, was the first English composition of this class. Henry Purcell, when he was only about seventeen, wrote *Dido and Æneas*. It was performed in 1677. Now, as Madame Raymond Ritter has said—

"Woman's practical career as a musician only began with the invention of the opera about 1600. It was not until her superiority as an actress and a singer had been

undeniably and triumphantly established on the stage that she was allowed to resume her musical participation in Church services." *

Purcell's opera had a very modest introduction to the world. It was performed at a girl's boarding-school, kept in Leicester Fields by Mr. James Priest, a famous dancing-master, who persuaded young Purcell to write the music to the libretto of the drama which had been composed by one Tate at his suggestion. Mr. Priest desired to have something for his pupils to perform, and the exhibition came off with great *éclat* in the presence of the pupils' parents and friends.

It is a little surprising that any one should have been found daring enough to carry out so startling an idea at a girls' school, and it seems odd that Mr. Priest should have been the proprietor of such an establishment.

The musical history of England affords little that is encouraging to dwell upon from the middle of the seventeenth century. A great many foreign artists visited this country, but native talent was at a very low ebb. There were no English composers of any note after Purcell, who died at thirty-seven years of age, just when Italian opera was beginning to take root in England.

* *Victoria Magazine*, 1876.

PERIOD III.

LIFE IN THE LAST CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

MATRONS AND MAIDS.

Artificiality of eighteenth-century life—The *rôle* of the middle-class woman—Scotch domestic life—The old maid—Admiration of foreigners for English women—English dress—Public morals—Contrast between town and country life—A country lady in London—Racquets, routs, and drums—Education of girls—The boarding-school—Habits and manners of the middle class—Le Blanc's opinion of the English.

"Le dix-huitième siècle aime la nature." The love of the eighteenth century for nature was, however, a capricious attachment, a spurious sentiment. No century so delighted in artificiality. Its dress, its habits, its amusements, its very speech,—all bear witness to its dislike of nature unadorned. It loved the town and the works of man. The eighteenth century stands out with a curiously distinct individuality. The influences that moulded society in the time of the Stuarts had passed away. The contest between the moralist and the sensualist had spent itself. Although the Puritan spirit lived on, it slumbered awhile, and the open profligacy

against which it had striven, though not extinguished, was manifested in less pronounced shapes. The Church was both lethargic and corrupt. For the first time in English history we come upon a period when there was no dominant spiritual influence. Religion, like everything else, was a matter of formalism.

Slowly the great characteristics of social life in England had changed. Romanism and feudalism had governed it in earlier times. Then came the Renaissance, with its vivifying power, followed by the reign of sensuality and the opposing force of Puritanism. It seemed as if the nation were exhausted; passion had spent itself, moral feeling was deadened, enthusiasm was quenched. The new force was conventionality.

Women in every-day life felt the spell of this goddess less than did the great ladies. Over the fashionable world she reigned supreme; but the *bourgeoisie*, while they admired, and as far as possible imitated, the ways of their social superiors, showed themselves more children of nature.

Increase of material ease and comfort was re-shaping the course of domestic life. As household arrangements were improved, new appliances invented, and the general conditions made smoother, woman's position changed. She was less completely

occupied with the means of living, and more open to outside influences. That she invariably made a good use of her liberty is not so clear. The prosperous, well-housed citizenesses of the eighteenth century probably spent much of their spare time in idle chatter—it was a great period for gossip—and in tricking themselves out to imitate the fine ladies of whom they got glimpses at church and in the public gardens. They rose late because it was fashionable, leaving their servants to do the work that their grandmothers would have shared. There is as much lost as gained in the uprooting of social habits while the people are still unripe for changes. And the women of the eighteenth century *were* unripe. There was more material than intellectual improvement. The literary movement hardly touched women in every-day life; the philanthropic movement had not made any headway, and as for politics, it was only the great ladies, with relatives and friends among statesmen, who concerned themselves with public affairs. Middle-class women seldom read the newspapers. It was in the coffee-houses that men learned and discussed the news of the day; they did not buy the papers and bring them home in London. In the country a weekly news-letter was handed from neighbour to neighbour, or discussed at village inns, but the

women-folk usually gathered their news by hearsay, not finding much to interest them in the curiously composed, ill-printed medley that called itself a newspaper.

The women of the middle classes did not keep pace with the men in enlarging their sphere of interests. Among the aristocracy women were naturally drawn more into the current of life by their connection with leading men of the time, by their intercourse with distinguished foreign visitors, by their opportunities of travel and of contact with the best thought of the day. But the women of the trading classes were removed from all these influences. Their *rôle* was a domestic one. The education which they received was not calculated to inspire them with any idea that their minds needed enlarging. It was seldom thought that women required anything beyond a few accomplishments.

In Scotland—

"domestick affairs and amuseing her husband was the bussiness of a good wife. Those that could afoard governesses for their children had them, but all they could learn them was to read English ill and plain work. The chief thing required was to hear them repeat Psalms and long catechisms, in which they were employed an hour or more every day, and almost the whole day on Sunday. If there was no governess to perform this work it was

done by the chaplan, of which there was one in every family. No attention was given to what we call accomplishments. Reading and writing well, or even spelling, was never thought of. Musicke, drawing, or French were seldom taught the girls. They were allowed to rune about and amuse themselves in the way they choiced, even to the age of women, at which time they were generally sent to Edinburgh for a winter or two to lairn to dress themselves, and to dance and see a little of the world. The world was only to be seen at Church, at marriages, burials, and baptisms. These were the only public places where the ladys went in full dress, and as they walked the street they were seen by everybody; but it was the fashion when in undress all-wise to be masked. When in the country their employment was in color'd work, beds, tapestry and other pieces of furniture; imitations of fruits and flowers with very little taste. If they read any it was either books of devotion or long romances, and sometimes both."

These are the words of an Ayrshire lady, whose reminiscences date back to the early years of the eighteenth century. She lived up till 1795, during which time she witnessed a great change in girls' education. Reading, writing, music, drawing, geography, history, even French and Italian were added gradually to the curriculum.

In former periods women were producers as well as distributors, each household being like a little township, dependent on itself. But in the eighteenth century, although domestic industries had not been

revolutionized as they have since been, there were factories and shops, and all sorts of hawkers, who vended goods of various kinds in the streets. In London and in the large towns there was no need for each family to produce its own necessaries, though in country districts the domestic arrangements were more stationary. Baking, brewing, and salting were still carried on in the larger houses occupied by the gentry, but in small households most of the things required for daily use were bought. The domestic *rôle* of the eighteenth-century woman among the middle classes was not so absorbing as to leave her no time for mental recreation. But books, like politics, were, for the most part, left to the men. There was so little circulation of literature that in London much of the reading was done standing at a bookseller's stall, a method obviously impossible to women. With such scanty education as was considered appropriate to the weaker sex, with no books but of the most dreary kind, written for young people, it was little wonder that the generality of girls grew up without any habit of reading, or of regarding literature as an essential element of their daily lives. We cannot think of the average woman in the last century as finding much of her pleasure in any intellectual occupation. She had been

neglected, her mind allowed to rust. The awakening that had taken place two hundred years before had been succeeded by a reaction, and there was a general apathy with regard to women's education.

A writer in the second quarter of the century, who is vaunting the superiority of men over women, says England is

"the place in the world where the fair sex is the most regarded, and, perhaps, deserves most to be so. . . . Nor is it easy to comprehend how it is possible to raise them higher with any show of reason, considering their natural incapacity for everything above the sphere they actually move in."

Foreigners were always struck by the freedom enjoyed by married women. One observes that

"among the common people the husbands seldom make their wives work. As to the women of quality, they don't trouble themselves about it."

The middle-class wife has been pictured for us by Fielding in the description of Squire Western's wife :—

"The Squire, to whom that poor woman had been a faithful upper-servant all the time of their marriage, had returned that behaviour by making what the world calls a good husband. He very seldom swore at her, perhaps not above once a week, and never beat her. She had not the least occasion for jealousy, and was perfect mistress of her time, for she was never interrupted by her husband, who

was engaged all the morning in his field exercises and all the evening with bottle companions."

Whatever the position of the wife, it was preferred to that of the single woman.

"An old maid is now thought such a curse as no Poetick Fury can exceed," writes the author of "The Ladies' Calling," "looked on as the most calamitous creature in nature. And I so far yield to the opinion as to confess it to those who are kept in that state against their wills; but sure, the original of that misery is from the desire, not the restraint, of marriage: let them but suppress that once, and the other will never be their infelicity. But I must not be so unkind to the sex as to think 'tis always such desire that gives them an aversion to celibacy; I doubt not many are frighted only with the vulgar contempt under which that state lyes: for which if there be no cure, yet there is the same armour against this which is against all other causeless reproaches, viz. to contemn it."

This supports the remark that women were more easily won than formerly. An elderly beau writes—

"The men of these days are strangely happy. In my time a fine woman was not to be gain'd without a long application and a thousand testimonies of an unfeign'd and constant regard; but now a game of romps or a lucky run at cards reduces the vanquished fair to accept of what condition the conqueror is pleased to give."

The modest demeanour of English women when seen abroad excited the admiration of foreigners,

who were a little astonished at the general taste for walking, which is

"a great diversion among the ladies and their manner of doing it is one way of knowing their character; desiring only to be seen, they would walk together for the most part without speaking, they are always dressed and always stiff; they go forward constantly, and nothing can amuse them or put them out of their way. . . . Yet, notwithstanding all their care to be seen, they are seldom coquets, nor have they any ridiculous affectations or bold ways."

It was not usual for girls to walk about alone, and was considered indecorous by the older generation.

"I know this age has so great a contempt of the former that 'tis but matter of scorn to alledge any of their customs; else I should say that the liberties that are taken now would then have been startled at. They that should then have seen a young maid rambling abroad without her mother or some other prudent person, would have looked on her as a stray, and thought it but a neighbourly office to have brought her home: whereas now 'tis a rarity to see them in any company graver than themselves, and she that goes with her parent (unless it be such a parent as is as wild as herself) thinks she does but walk abroad with jaylour."

Our national fault—want of taste in dress, and fondness for new fashions, however unsuitable—called forth the censure of an Italian visitor:—

"The ladies of England do not understand the art of

decorating their persons so well as those of Italy; they generally increase the volume of the head by a cap which makes it much bigger than nature, a fault which should be always avoided in adorning that part. . . . They wear their petticoats too short behind, and not imitating the most graceful birds, as the ladies of Italy and France, in a trail of their robes upon the ground, lose the greatest grace which dress can impart to a female. . . .

"In truth, not beauty, but novelty governs in London, not taste, but copy. A celebrated woman of five foot six inches gives law to the dress of those who are but four feet two. . . . There is nothing so common as to hear the ladies of this nation assure you that such a shape is quite out of fashion, and the present reigning mode is the slender or the large; as if the creative power, like the hands of mantua makers, had cut the human person by a new pattern and thrown away the old. . . . This is not the case in Italy and France; the ladies know that the grace which attends plumpness is unbecoming the slender; and the tall lady never affects to look like a fairy; nor the dwarf like the giantess, but each studying the air and mein which become her figure, appears in the most engaging dress that can be made, to set off her person to the greatest advantage."

About the middle of the century quite an outcry arose about the introduction of so many French fashions, and the prints of the day are full of caricatures of French ways and costumes. It was the upper classes who were first seized with this mania for imitation, and the example being infectious, spread rapidly through all ranks of society. The

fashionable world followed France, and the middle classes followed the fashionable world. The mode of life, the popularity of public gardens, to which high and low resorted, brought the ways of the gay world under the eyes of the staid folk who dwelt in the city.

"What was looked upon as the beau-monde, then lived much more in public than now, and men and women of fashion displayed their weaknesses to the world in public places of amusement and resort with little shame or delicacy. The women often rivalled the men in libertinism and even emulated them sometimes in their riotous manners." *

In 1770 an Act was passed declaring—

"That all women of whatever age, rank, profession, or degree, whether virgins, maids or widows, that shall from and after such Act, impose upon, seduce, or betray into matrimony, any of his Majesty's male subjects by the scents, paints, cosmetic washes, artificial teeth, false hair, Spanish wool, iron stays, hoops, high-heeled shoes, etc., shall incur the penalty of the law now in force against witchcraft and like misdemeanours, and that the marriage upon conviction shall stand null and void."

Public morals were at a low ebb if we may trust the observation of that experienced traveller, M. Grosley, who says that the women of the town were bolder and more numerous in London than in Paris or Rome. They thronged the footpaths at

* T. Wright, "Caricature History of the Georges."

night, and even in broad daylight accosted passers by, more particularly those whom they perceived to be foreigners.

Archenholz, who visited London some years after Grosley, says :—

"On compte cinquante mille prostituées à Londres, sans les maîtresses en titre. Leurs usages et leur conduite déterminent les différentes classes où il faut les ranger. La plus vile de toutes habite dans les lieux publics sous la direction d'une matrone qui les loge et les habille. Ces habits même pour les filles communs, sont de soie, suivant l'usage que le luxe a généralement introduit en Angleterre. . . . Dans la seule paroisse de Marybonne, qui est la plus grande et la plus peuplée de l'Angleterre, on en comptoit, il y a quelques années, treize mille, dont dix-sept cents occupoient des maisons entières à elles seules."

One of the causes of the number of these *filles de joie* was, probably, the constant immigration from the provinces of young friendless girls eager to taste the delights of London. When their means were exhausted it was impossible for them to return or obtain employment without credentials, and they entered upon the only career that seemed open to them.

Another Frenchman comments on the openly lax morality which disgraced English family life—

"There's yet a much greater fault which the English women have reason to complain of, and that is that most

of the husbands keep mistresses. Some have carried them home and made them eat at the same table with their wives, and yet no mischief happened. . . . They have been seen even in company with the wives, and if there is any distinction, 'tis that they are handsomer for the most part, better dressed and less starch'd." *

"If this be thought an exaggerated portrait, drawn with the inaccuracy of hasty observation and coloured by prejudice, the same cannot be said with regard to the pen of Fielding, who, in "Tom Jones," reflects popular opinion and represents the standard of the day. A young fellow, named Nightingale, who has betrayed his landlady's daughter, is thus addressed by his uncle :—

"Honour is a creature of the world's making, and the world has the power of a creator over it, and may govern and direct it as they please. Now, you well know how trivial these breaches of contract are thought: even the grossest make but the wonder and conversation of the day. Is there a man who afterwards will be more backward in giving you his sister or daughter, or is there any sister or daughter who would be more backward to receive you? Honour is not concerned in these engagements."

It will be remembered how "Squire Western," when he heard that "Tom Jones" had betrayed a village girl, laughed at the episode as a good joke, and called upon his daughter to bear him out

* Muralt.

that women would think no worse of a young fellow for that. As for "Sophia" herself, it proved no serious check on her passion.

And yet England was said to be the country where offences against women were punished with the greatest severity, and where, if a man wished to find an unlawful partner, he must search among those whose poverty made them ready victims to temptation.

It cannot be doubted that women of the middle classes were accustomed to expect a lower standard of morality among men than at the present day. The novels of the last century show that what are now deemed as grave offences were then considered mere peccadilloes. Drinking and swearing were foibles too common to excite notice, and breaches of the moral code were easily condoned. The women were not so prone themselves as might have been thought to the sins which they tolerated, but they were brought up in the belief that a larger licence should be allowed to men. The same tendency is apparent now in circles where the women take little or no share in the occupations of their husbands and brothers, and where the interests are totally different. The women, who are the most ready to be lenient where they should be severe, set up different standards of morality

for the sexes, and draw a dividing-line between masculine and feminine virtues and vices.

What greatly impressed Frenchmen was the seriousness of English wives, and their sober, chaste lives.

"Au milieu des débordemens, souvent poussés à l'excès, dans cette grande ville, il est bien rare de voir la corruption attaquer une femme mariée, et chercher à lui faire partager ses infames plaisirs. Elle trouve un rempart insurmontable dans son amour pour sa famille, les soins de son ménage, et sa gravité naturelle. Je soutiens même qu'il n'y a pas de ville dans le monde où l'honneur des maris soit moins en danger qu'à Londres."

Another writes:—

"Le part qu'ont les femmes au sérieux et à la mélancolie nationale en les rendant sédentaire, les attache à leurs maris, à leurs enfans, et à leur ménage."

Le Blanc remarks, with a touch of wounded vanity—

"Most of those who among us pass for men of good fortune in amours, would with difficulty succeed in addressing an English fair. She would not sooner be subdued by the insinuating softness of their jargon than by the amber with which they are perfumed."

Naturally a Frenchman thought his own countrywomen more attractive—

"The women in France are not so reserved as in England; but we find charms in their company which

those of this country have not. The one, by their awkwardness, have the defect of making virtue itself disagreeable; the others, more engaging, have often the pernicious art of making vice seem amiable."

There were those who complained that in France—

"women have too much boldness, and are scarcely women. The continual commerce between the sexes causes, as it were, an exchange of characters which makes each sex derogate something from its proper character. They (the women) drink hard at table, and do it agreeably. They understand gaming as well as men. They go a-hunting with men, and come so near to men in everything that they are scarcely women."

What would have been thought of the modern Englishwoman who rides to hounds, wears masculine, tailor-made clothes, and shares the serious occupations as well as the amusements of the male sex, it is needless to discuss. In the last century pursuits that are now quite common, and pass without notice, were thought extravagantly fast, while our ancestors tolerated a licence of manners and speech that we, in our turn, should repudiate.

There was considerable difference between the manners and habits of town dwellers and those living in the country. An article in *The Female Spectator*, in 1745, recounts a country lady's experiences on her first visit to London, and her

amazement at the habits of London folk. She went to call on an old acquaintance with whom she had at one time been extremely intimate :—

"It was between eleven and twelve when I came to her door, where, after knocking a considerable time, a footman with his nightcap on, and pale as just risen from the dead, came yawning forth, and on my asking for his lady, 'O Gad, madam,' drawled he out, 'we had a racquet here last night, and my lady cannot possibly be stirring these three hours.' I wondered what had happened, but would not ask any questions of the fellow, and only left my name and said I would wait on her at a more proper time."

The lady returns about three o'clock, after shopping and dining, and thus describes her visit :—

"I had now the good fortune to be admitted, and found her at her chocolate ; she had a dish of it in one hand, and with the other she seemed very busy in sorting a large parcel of guineas, which she divided in two heaps on a table that stood before her. She rose and received me with a great deal of civility and kindness, told me she was sorry for my disappointment on my first calling, but added with a smile that when I had been a little while in town I should learn to lie longer in bed in a morning."

After this the London lady explains to her country visitor the meaning of the term racquet, viz. when the number of company assembled for cards exceeded ten tables ; if it were fewer, the

entertainment was called a "rout," and if there were only two tables it was a "drum."

To the bewildered visitor the amusements of London folk seemed very odd, and she adds that she found cheating at cards almost as fashionable as cards themselves.

As the stage-coach system developed country people came more to London, and Londoners began to pay periodical visits to watering-places, whither they carried the dissipations of town life. The love of scenery is a taste that has been largely developed within the present century. When people travelled formerly, if it were not for business, it was to comply with fashion and for the excitement of a change, but not to revel in the beauties of Nature. The eighteenth century was full of artificial sentiment. It disliked in women the evidences of health and of a robust constitution of mind. The effect on ordinary women was to make them shallow and affected. They were not taught to think; they were encouraged to believe that appearances counted for everything, reality for nothing. As long as the exterior was pleasing, it mattered not what was beneath.

"When a poor young lady is taught to value herself on nothing but her cloaths and to think she's very fine when well accoutred; when she hears say, that 'tis wisdom

enough for her to know how to dress herself, that she may become amiable in his eyes, to whom it appertains to be knowing and learned; who can blame her if she lay out her industry and money on such accomplishments, and sometimes extends it farther than her misinformer desires she should. . . .

"If from our infancy we are nurs'd upon ignorance and vanity; are taught to be proud and petulent, delicate and fantastick, humorous and inconstant, 'tis not strange that the ill-effects of this conduct appears in all the future actions of our lives. . . . That, therefore, women are unprofitable to most, and a plague and dishonour to some men is not much to be regretted on account of the men, because 'tis the product of their own folly, in denying them the benefits of an ingenuous and liberal education, the most effectual means to direct them into, and secure their progress in the ways of vertue." *

The flirtation with literature, the coquetting with accomplishments which passed for female education, were shams, like the powdered *pouffs* of hair and the face-washes. It was an age of shams, and women were told, in effect if not in words, that successful shamming was their *rôle* in life. They were to sham sensitiveness, modesty, ignorance (which could not have been difficult), anything and everything which it was deemed likely would commend them to the perverted taste of the day. The vapourish, hysterical, fainting heroines of romance are only slightly coloured pictures of reality.

* Mary Astell.

The physical effects of the system of education were as harmful as the results on the mind.

"Miss is set down to her frame before she can put on her clothes; and is taught to believe that to excel at the needle is the only thing that can entitle her to general esteem. . . . One hardly meets with a girl who can at the same time boast of early performances by the needle and a good constitution." *

The Female Spectator issued a protest against that devotion to the needle, which was regarded as one of the cardinal virtues in women:—

"Nor can I by any means approve of compelling young ladies of fortune to make so much use of the needle, as they did in former days, and some few continue to do. In my opinion a lady of condition should learn just as much of cookery and of work as to know when she is imposed upon by those she employs in both those necessary occasions, but no more. To pass too much of her time in them may acquire her the reputation of a notable housewife, but not of a woman of fine taste, or any way qualify her for polite conversation, or of entertaining herself agreeably when alone. It always makes me smile when I hear the mother of fine daughters say, 'I always keep my girls at their needle.' One, perhaps, is working her a gown, another a quilt for a bed, and a third engaged to make a whole dozen of shirts for her father. And then when she has carried you into the nursery and shewn you them all, add, 'It is good to keep them out of idleness; when young people have

* Buchan, "Domestic Medicine."

nothing to do, they naturally wish to do something they ought not.' "

In the second half of the century, when the influence of the fashionable world was more strongly felt among the *bourgeoisie*, the boarding-school, with its flimsy accomplishments and its lack of solid education, began to attract the daughters of a different class. Hitherto it had been the monopoly of the so-called gentlefolk, but now mingling with these were the daughters of tradesmen and farmers, who had money to spend and a fancy for making "ladies" of their girls. It may have been a step up in the social ladder for these newcomers, but from an educational point of view it was no gain. The training of the fashionable boarding-school was only a veneer.

To the French it seemed odd and unnatural to see English parents sending their children off to boarding-schools, or to be educated abroad at the convent schools of Paris. In France young girls were kept at home with their mothers much more than in England.

"Les parens se débarassent de leurs enfans," writes La Combe in his "Tableau de Londres," "en les jettant au hazard dans des pensions ou des académies. Ils semblent rougir de voir leurs enfans se former sous leurs yeux ; ils prefèrent des étrangers, qui n'ont ni attachement ni la

connaissance des passions des enfans qu'on leur confie, et les elévent tous avec indifférence sur le même plan. Il serait plus raisonnable d'avoir les enfans chez soi, d'étudier leur goût, leur penchant, de les façonner peu à peu par la douceur et les caresses, à la docilité au travail, à l'honnêteté et de les familiariser insensiblement avec tout ce qu'ils doivent savoir un jour et pratiquer dans la société. On est étonné, à Paris surtout, lorsqu'on voit arriver de jeunes Anglaises dans les couvents. Quoi? dit on, les mœurs sont donc bien corrompues à Londres pour nous charger d'élever les demoiselles."

As the century grew older the habits and amusements of the leisured classes spread to the trading community.

"I will not presume to say that all the misfortunes the city of London at present labours under are owing to their preposterous fondness of following the fashions of the court; but that they are in a great measure so I believe most people will readily enough agree to." *

Speaking of a City dame who had taken up with the fashions of the West-end, the same writer observed—

"A great courtier now become, she looks with contempt on her former fellow-citizens, joins in the laugh coquets and beaus set up whenever any of them appear, and sees not that herself is equally an object of ridicule to those she is so vain of imitating. Thus despising and despised without one real friend, she lives a gawdy, glittering,

* *The Female Spectator.*

worthless member of society, and endured by those whose example has rendered her such, on no other account than that immense wealth which they find means to share with her, while she imagines they are doing her an honour."

The busy merchants and traders whose wives were so eager to be in the fashion were themselves no less anxious to be up to the times.

"I do not but see that the men are as eager to quit their compting houses and strut in the drawing-room disguised in a long sword and taper wig as the women can be in a new brocade, exactly the same pattern with that of one of the Princesses. The infection has spread itself pretty equally through both sexes. And the husband has little to reproach the wife with, or the wife the husband, but what each are guilty of in the same degree."

Merchants and bankers, in spite of the cares of business, took life very easily, spending the first part of the morning in the coffee-houses, and, after a couple of hours at the Exchange, going home to dinner at four o'clock.

The manners and customs of the eighteenth century accentuated the differences of sex, and set up artificial barriers between men and women. Foreigners, because they heard politics constantly discussed, and forming the chief interest of the citizen's life, and because they saw the wife acquiesce in her husband's views, concluded that politics proved a strong bond of union in family life.

"Cet intérêt repand dans le domestique un nouvel agrément: le mari y trouvant toujours quelqu'un avec qui il peut traiter à cœur ouvert, aussi longuement et aussi profondement que bon lui semble, les objets qui l'interessent le plus."

As has been noted elsewhere, interest in politics —especially politics which dealt in personalities— was keen enough among the women of the aristocracy, for the game was being largely played by their own friends, but the women of the middle classes were generally indifferent to public affairs. Except on occasions of great public excitement, the City madam, the country squire's lady, and the farmer's wife knew little of what was stirring in the world of statecraft. They lumped together politics and pipes as part of the men's amusements with which they had no direct concern. They shared their husbands' views because they had none of their own, and it was not worth while troubling their heads about such matters as changes of Ministry, Bills in Parliament, and so forth.

Occupations and habits caused men and women to lead separate lives. Hard riding and hard drinking were the recreations of the country squire; the farmer had his out-door duties; the tradesman had his apprentices to superintend; the shopkeeper had no suburban residence, and was a shopkeeper

all day long while the shutters were open. The wife occupied herself with her store-cupboard, her linen-press, and her kitchen, and gossiped in her parlour with neighbours over a dish of tea.

"The English," wrote Le Blanc, "lose a great deal in conversing so little with the sex whom Nature has endowed with the graces, and whose company has constant charms and a certain sweetness not to be found in that of men. The conversation of women polishes and softens our behaviour; by the habit we acquire of endeavouring to please them, we contract a tone of voice equally agreeable to both sexes. . . .

"The custom of living with what is most valuable in both sexes, makes the pleasure and happiness of life. . . . And 'tis by too much neglecting this custom that the English have a certain disagreeable bluntness in their character."

In this century many things have occurred to modify the differences in the habits of the sexes, to bring men and women more into the same current of ideas, occupations, amusements. To a much greater extent than formerly the evolution of women is proceeding along the same lines as the evolution of men. In the last century men regarded women as—

"made only to take possession of their hearts, and seldom or never to afford any amusement to their minds. They prefer the pleasure of toasting their healths in a tavern to

that of chatting with them in a circle. They treat them as if they had been as much of another species as of another sex. For the most part they look on them as good for nothing but to dissipate their vapours or ease the fatigue of business."

They now regard them as comrades instead of playthings.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT LADY OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

London society in the last century—Lord Chesterfield on taste—Coarse language of great ladies—The speculation mania among ladies—Narrowness of fashionable life—Manners and amusements—Difficulties of social intercourse—The founders of Almack's Club—The passion for politics—Lady Mary Wortley Montagu on women's training—Some traits of eighteenth-century life.

After the turmoil of the Stuart period was over, and the country had settled down under the rule of the dull Hanoverians, social life in England assumed a new form. The circles of the great ladies who now come into prominence, partly through their wealth and dignities, but more on account of their qualifications as leaders of society, eclipse the circles gathered in royal palaces. Until the eighteenth century society consisted of factions. There was a court party and a party strongly opposed to the court; there were court beauties and favourites, duly hated by the opposite set. In London there were mansions where revels were

held by great families, but there was no cohesion among the scattered elements of London life. It was only in the seventeenth century that it became fashionable to keep a town as well as a country house, or rather to spend the winter in London in a house hired for the season, which then included the darkest and coldest months in the year. London was only just beginning to be made the centre of all that was most brilliant in social life, and society's leaders were still, for the most part, performing their functions at their country estates.

But in the eighteenth century London has its well-established social circles, which take the lead in all matters of fashion and taste, having first acquired the tone from Paris. It was in the second quarter of the century that the question of taste was always uppermost in polite circles, according to Lord Chesterfield.

"Taste," he writes, "is now the fashionable word of the fashionable world. Everything must be done with taste; that is settled, but where that taste is is not quite so certain, for after all the pains I have taken to find out what was meant by the word, and whether those who use it oftenest had any clear idea annexed to it, I have only been able negatively to discover that they do not mean their own natural taste, but on the contrary, that they have sacrificed it to an imaginary one, of which they can give no account. They build houses in taste, which they

cannot live in with conveniency; they suffer with impatience the music they pretend to hear with rapture, and they even eat nothing they like, for the sake of eating in taste. Eating, itself, seems to me to be rather a subject of humiliation than pride, since the imperfection of our nature appears in the daily necessity we lie under of recruiting it in that manner, so that one would think the only care of a rational being should be to repair his decaying fabric as cheap as possible. But the present fashion is directly contrary; and eating now is the greatest pride, business, and expense of life, and that, too, not to support, but to destroy nature."

There was certainly a want of taste in the language used by great ladies, whose speech was often so coarse as not to bear repetition. One day the Duchess of Marlborough called upon Lord Mansfield, the Lord Chancellor, *incognita*. When the clerk went in to the Chancellor to announce the visitor, he said: "I could not make out, Sir, who she was, but she swore so dreadfully that she must be a lady of quality." The substance of ladies' talk was also open to censure. Writes Swift:

> "Or how should I, alas, relate
> The sum of all their senseless prate,
> Their Inuendo's, Hints, and Slanders,
> Their meanings, lewds, and double entanders!
> Now comes the general scandal charge.
> What some invent the rest enlarge."

Expressions then in common use among ladies would not be tolerated now in decent society. In

their intercourse with men they were more restrained, at least in writing, but the attitude of the sexes towards each other was one peculiar to the age. There was so much affectation of gallantry on the part of the men, and such a want of straightforwardness on the part of the women, that the whole tone of society was thoroughly artificial. Between the wits, statesmen, men of letters, and the great ladies of their acquaintance there was a romantic kind of relation worthy of the days of chivalry. The elaborately framed protestations of devotion to which women were generally quite ready to listen belonged rather to feudal romance than to real life. But the romance of the eighteenth century was tinctured with the spirit of banter, and both sides were well aware that the whole thing was merely put on, like the powder and the patches. So general was this playing at sentiment that when real feeling for once in a way tried to get the ascendant it was unable to obtain credence.

The fashionable dames of the eighteenth century loved to dabble in politics, which afforded a fresh excitement when the social round began to grow a little flavourless. The eighteenth century was a great period for letter-writing, and political news was a constant topic of correspondence. The interest centred on men rather than on principles.

These great ladies, when they wrote to each other or to their friends of the male sex, did not discuss causes. They were concerned with individuals, with the career of the gentlemen of their acquaintance. Looked at in this way, politics were, in the phraseology of the age, "vastly" entertaining.

When the rage for speculation came in, the ladies became ardent speculators. They exchanged confidences and congratulations over the great South Sea Bubble, before it burst, and hoped that "stocks were going on prosperously." Mrs. Molesworth, writing to Mrs. Howard (Countess of Suffolk), in June, 1720, says—

"To tell you the truth, I am South Sea mad, and I find that philosophic temper of mind which made me content under my circumstances, when there was no seeming probability of bettering them, forsakes me on this occasion; and I cannot, without great regret, reflect that for want of a little money, I am forced to let slip an opportunity which is never like to happen again. Perhaps you will think me unreasonable when I tell you that good Lady Sunderland was so mindful of her absent friends as to secure us a £500 subscription, which money my father had laid down for us, and it is now doubled; but this has but given me a taste of fortune, which makes me more eager to pursue it. As greedy as I seem, I should have been satisfied if I could by any means have raised the sum of £500 or £1000 more, but the vast price that money bears, and our being not able to make any

security according to law, has made me reject a scheme I had laid of borrowing such a sum of some monied friend."

The ladies got their men friends, with whom they corresponded copiously, to gamble for them. Thus the Duke of Argyll, in 1719–20, acted for the Countess of Suffolk, and invested for her a large sum of money in the Missouri scheme, informing her from time to time how things were going.

The taste for speculation was worse than the taste for French fashions, which was decried by Lord Chesterfield.

"I do not mean to undervalue the French," he writes. "I know their merit. They are a cheerful, industrious, ingenious, polite people, and have many things in which I wish we did imitate them. But, like true mimics, we only ape their imperfections, and awkwardly copy those parts which all reasonable Frenchmen themselves contemn in the originals. If this folly went no farther than disguising both our meats and ourselves in the French modes, I should bear it with more patience, and content myself with representing only to my country folks that the one would make them sick and the other ridiculous; but when even the materials for the folly are to be brought over from France too, it becomes a much more serious consideration. Our trade and manufactures are at stake, and what seems at first only very silly is, in truth, a great national evil and a piece of civil immorality."

The great lady of the eighteenth century is always, so to speak, in full dress. She seems to live in and for society, to be the leading figure in a great show. It is difficult to think of her except with a train and an elaborate *coiffure*, with her fan and smelling-bottle and her grand manner *en princesse*. The elaboration of life in the fashionable world, the affectations of speech and manner, and the imposing costumes surround her with an air of artificiality. Though she might be an ardent politician or a brilliant wit, though she might achieve fame in the world of letters, she lived in a narrow circle. The great social movements of the country were as nothing to her. The history of the classes below her own had no meaning for her mind. Court intrigues, political changes, were events of moment; they were part of her world; she knew no other. Her outlook was limited to personal interests and ambitions. The accident of birth gave her a part to play in the affairs of the world. And she played it like a great lady, whose proper business is pleasure. She flirted, intrigued, and cajoled; suffered herself to be alternately flattered and neglected when she wanted a place at court or to worm out some political secret for a friend. But of the healthy, broad interest which regards the politics of to-day, both home and

foreign, as the history of the morrow, she was generally devoid.

The great lady of the eighteenth century, unless she happened to be gifted with exceptional breadth of view, was indifferent—often contemptuously indifferent—to matters outside her own fashionable circle. Her education and the temperament of the age fostered this feeling. She had not the domestic responsibilities of women of a lower grade, or of great ladies of former times. In their place she was offered the distractions of society. One by one her duties had fallen away from her. Domestic occupations did not form part of the *rôle* of a great lady then any more than at the present time. The altered conditions of life gave her leisure; the increase of luxury begat a distaste for exertion. There was a great deal of licence of manners allowed to women, but little real freedom. They could not venture out of the beaten track without incurring ridicule, and possibly insult. In all the relations of life they were made to feel they were dependent beings. As daughters they had the inferior portion, and no profession but marriage. As wives they had nothing at all of their own, not even their children—a condition only remedied late in the present century. But the lack of all interest in their children, which was said to be a

characteristic of the French nobility, was not so marked in England. In France it was considered very *bourgeois* to be surrounded by a family. Husbands and wives commonly lived independent lives. "Une mariage uni devient une anomalie dans le grand monde, un manque de goût." *

It was the attitude in which women were regarded that affected their position more than the actual existence of repressive or deteriorating customs. And to public opinion the great lady was both more susceptible and more subject than other women, for she lived with all eyes upon her. Without a great deal of moral courage she could not step out of her bounds or revolt against the conditions of her life. A narrow mental horizon, a cramping education, united with wealth and high place, were not favourable to the evolution of women, morally or intellectually. In the eighteenth century women moved in a circle, from the meshes of which they were not freed until the present century had run half its course.

With all the elaborate airs and dress which prevailed in the eighteenth century there was a coarseness of taste and behaviour which is in odd contrast to the exaggerated politeness affected by *beaux* and *élégantes*. There seems a good foundation for

* S. Bouchot, "La Famille d'Autrefois."

Walpole's description of the gaiety of the women as "an awkward jollity." The diversions of the great ladies read strangely to our modern ears. What would be thought now of dukes and duchesses going about London with their friends in hired vehicles to see the sights? But in the spring of 1740, the Duke and Duchess of Portland organized a jaunt (as one of the party described it) to the City to see the City show-places. There were four ladies and four gentlemen, and they set out at ten o'clock in the morning in a couple of hackney coaches, made a comprehensive tour, and wound up by dining at a City tavern. "I never spent a more agreeable day," writes one of the ladies of the party.

The fashionable diversions, balls and routs, were repeated over and over again at every watering-place.

"Pleasure with an English lady is a capital and rational affair. A party at Bath is perhaps the fruit of six months' meditation and intrigue: she must feign sickness, gain over the servants, corrupt the physician, importune an aunt, deceive a husband, and in short have recourse to every artifice in order to succeed, and the business at last is to get fully paid for all the pains that have been taken. Pleasure is so much the more attractive to the English women as it is less familiar and costs them more to obtain. Melancholy persons feel joy more sensibly than those who are habituated to it." *

* Le Blanc.

Amusements had no background of broad general interests. It was inevitable that their effect should be enervating. Some fresh zest was wanting, and it was found in a licentiousness of manner, just as flavour was added to conversation by doubtful anecdotes. A phrase in general use was "demi-reps." It was the fashion to abbreviate words, and "rep" was commonly used for "reputation," a thing in constant danger of being lost or destroyed at tea-tables. Walpole, writing in the last quarter of the century, notes with pleasure and surprise the unusual occupations of some of his fair friends, who busied themselves with carving and decorative work to adorn the interior of their houses.

"How much more amiable," he says, "the old women of the next age will be than most of those we remember who used to tumble at once from gallantry to devout scandal and cards, and revenge on the young of their own sex the desertion of ours. Now they are ingenious. They will not want amusement."

The great ladies of the eighteenth century sadly wanted amusement, for they had nothing else to fill up their time. It was not fashionable to be philanthropic, to start societies for the propagation of new social creeds. And there were not nearly so many diversions. There was no fishing in the

Norwegian fjords in the summer, no autumn shooting-parties among the Scotch moors, no winter trips to the Riviera. At Bath, Tunbridge Wells, and other spas whither the fashionable world resorted, the social round was only varied by the bathing and drinking. The bad state of the roads often afforded diversion to the young, and many a merry mishap befell parties returning from festivities in the country. It certainly added to the excitement of a ball to know that there was every probability of being overturned on the road, or having to ford a stream swollen by the rain. The vivacious Elizabeth Robinson (afterwards Mrs. Montagu) describes how greatly she relished a break-down of the carriage on the return journey after a ball in the country.

The highwaymen who haunted the outskirts of London lent a melodramatic colour to all assemblies after dark. Even in broad daylight people who had anything to lose traversed unfrequented roads with fear and trembling. Certainly these conditions of social life averted the danger of monotony.

Looked at from another side, the great lady of the eighteenth century bears favourable comparison with the great lady of modern times. She was a more distinct individual influence in society than her successors. And yet neither then nor later had we *salons* comparable to those in Paris.

"Il n'y a pas à Londres comme à Paris des bureaux de femmes de bel esprit. Les auteurs anglais ne consultent pas les femmes; ils ne mendient pas leurs suffrages. Les affaires publiques intéressent le beau sexe anglais, mais il ne s'ingère pas de décider entre les intérêts de l'opposition et de la cour. Les femmes dans le monde, ne parlent ni de guerre, ni de politique, pratiquent leur religion et ne discutent point des dogmes. En général les femmes anglaises sont douces, modestes, et vertueuses." *

But there were notable society leaders, such as the ladies who founded Almack's Club, some of whom, like Lady Molyneux, were beauties who set the fashions. Almack's, which was opened in 1765, was a club for both sexes, on the model of the men's club at White's. Ladies nominated and elected the men, and the men chose the ladies. The founders were Mrs. Fitzroy, Lady Pembroke, Mrs. Meynel, Miss Pelham, Miss Lloyd, and Lady Molyneux.

Better known to after generations are the names of the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, the Duchess of Rutland, Lady Mary Chudleigh, the sisters Gunning. Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, whose most intimate friend was the Duchess of Portland, collected the wits and brilliant talkers, and made Montagu House a rallying-point for all that was most attractive in society. The Countess of Suffolk was

* Londres, la Cour et les Provinces.

at one time the centre round which court gossip revolved. Lady Caroline Petersham kept up the pace with her frolics and jaunts. There was the more strictly political set, who were perpetually discussing the action of Ministers, and the probable effects on themselves and their friends. The ladies in this set, impelled largely by personal motives, were as keen about political moves as any party wire-puller.

"Our ladies are grown such vehement politicians that no other topic is admissible," writes Walpole in 1783, the year of the memorable Westminster election. He complains that

> "politics have engrossed all conversation and stifled other events, if any have happened. Indeed, our ladies who used to contribute to enliven correspondence are become politicians, and, as Lady Townley says, 'squeeze a little too much lemon into conversation.'"

There was a good deal of acrimony imported into the atmosphere of political circles, partly because of the strong personal element pervading all politics. The weakness of eighteenth-century society was its narrowness. It cared nothing, comparatively speaking, for large general questions. The literary set discussed books and authors, but society in general did not care very much about

literature. A new poem or a new romance were matters of interest because new; it was the correct thing to show acquaintance with the latest productions in verse or prose. Politics absorbed a great many in the fashionable world, but chiefly on the ground of personal interest. Society lived in a kind of mental stays.

The great ladies of the eighteenth century do not seem to have thought of work as a distraction when pleasures began to pall. They would have been bored to extinction at the idea. The worship of work is a characteristic of the nineteenth century. Those who do not work for profit work for the sake of the occupation, at some self-imposed task. The great philanthropic current, using the adjective to describe all forms of social amelioration, has drawn into its stream numbers of recruits from the so-called leisured classes. Indeed it is the members of this class who largely carry on works of general usefulness. England has become the country of volunteers in the public service.

The eighteenth century worshipped idleness. It looked upon labour as ignoble. This view of life had its effect on the bringing-up of girls in the higher ranks. They were bred to idleness as their proper vocation. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, writing to her daughter, Lady Bute, in 1753,

about the education of the Countess's daughter, says—

"I could give many examples of ladies whose ill-conduct has been very notorious, which has been owing to that ignorance which has exposed them to idleness, which is justly called the mother of mischief. There is nothing so like the education of a woman of quality as that of a prince: they are taught to dance, and the exterior part of what is called good breeding, which if they attain, they are extraordinary creatures in their kind, and have all the accomplishments required by their directors. The same characters are formed by the same lessons, which inclines me to think (if I dare say it), that nature has not placed us in an inferior rank to men, no more than the females of other animals, where we see no distinction of capacity; though I am persuaded that if there was a commonwealth of rational horses (as Dr. Swift has supposed), it would be an established maxim among them that a mare could not be taught to pace."

The life of a great lady in the eighteenth century is well reflected in the contemporary literature. The satires of poets, the strictures of moralists, the raillery of wits, bring before us the social side of the period in numberless ways. A lady who was not a politician or a blue-stocking killed time by rising late, spending several hours over an elaborate toilette, and preparing herself for the gaieties of the evening. The eighteenth century

was in some respects a period of inanition. The formalism which pervaded its literature was seen in another aspect in the social life of the age. There was a general want of the sympathetic spirit. Each circle in society lived shut up within itself, not knowing, nor caring to know, how the rest of the world went on. The narrowness of this attitude told more strongly on the wealthy classes, who had not the stimulus of being obliged to make an effort for the satisfaction of any desire. Social progress, as a recent writer has observed, is not the product of the intellect, but is due to the altruistic spirit.* This spirit was asleep in the eighteenth century. In previous centuries there had been more progress with fewer opportunities. During periods of unrest women's energies were called forth to cope with difficulties which a later civilization smoothed away. Family life, even for great ladies, offered scope, in times past, for the constant exercise of activity in the discharge of functions which lapsed in more refined ages. The leisure which had been painfully won in the progress of civilization the women of the eighteenth century knew not how to use. They dallied with trifles, yawned out of sheer vacuity, invented wants to pass the time, were by turns elated and vapourish, and affected sentiment

* B. Kidd, "Social Evolution."

for the sake of excitement. There were servile imitations of French manners as well as fashions, and neither were successful. Instead of progressing to a wider life, society turned off into a sidewalk of artificiality and moral inertia.

END OF VOL. I.

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES.
J. D. & Co.

RETURN TO ➡ **CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT**
202 Main Library 642-3403

LOAN PERIOD 1 **HOME USE**	2	3
4	5	6

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS
1-month loans may be renewed by calling 642-3405
6-month loans may be recharged by bringing books to Circulation Desk
Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior to due date

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

REC. CIR. FEB 9 '77
AUG 12 1977 92
Returned by
FEB 23 1977
Santa Cruz Library
REC. CIR. FEB 23 '77

NOV 31 1978
REC. CIR. NOV 29 '78
FEB 5 1979
REC. CIR. JAN 8 1979
RECEIVED BY
NOV DEC 9 1980
CIRCULATION DEPT.

JAN 8 1981
REC. CIR. DEC 9 '80
SEP 06 1989
AUTO. DISC.
JUN 27 1989

INTERLIBRARY LOAN
MAR 9 1978
UNIV. OF CALIF., BERK.
MAY 16 2004
REC. ILL APR 11 1978
REC. ILL APR 14 1978

FORM NO. DD 6, 40m, 6'76
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
BERKELEY, CA 94720

LD21-A30m-7,'75
(R2276s10)476-A-32
REC. CIR. MAR 2 '76
DEC 24 1976
General Library
University of California
Berkeley
Feb 24 77

YC 43446

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES

C020912276

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY